

Households in Focus

Majority World Theological Development: A Role for the University?

by Kevin Higgins

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My recent appointment to the presidency of a university has forced me to synthesize my experience in majority world theological education. It just happened that the theme of this EMS conference gave me the opportunity to frame my thoughts in this paper. And in doing so I want to take a more autobiographical approach. I make no pretense that this is a scholarly, peer-reviewed effort. I would prefer to be personal and professional rather than academic, and allow you to understand how I have been influenced by various movements, thinkers or trends.

I have my share of higher education experiences, including holding an MDiv and a PhD, and teaching and designing MA level courses. However, I approach the topic of this paper essentially as a field-focused person, one who has been privileged to serve alongside emerging movements in mission: alongside leaders of new movements to Jesus among Muslims in South Asia, and alongside leaders of new sending movements from churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In those roles, my feet have been firmly planted in the world of non-formal training and education, but also in the long-term process of serving those who seek to develop crucial contextual theological formation within Muslim and other contexts. Along the way, my own thinking about universities, education, and theology has undergone a set of paradigm changes. I am beginning to learn that, in some ways, these changes in my thinking mirror some of the paradigm shifts in theological education.

This article is really aimed at describing those shifts, and how that shapes what I see for the future of the university that I now serve, William Carey International University (WCIU). I do so in the hope that this journey will contribute in some way to the larger conversation about education, theological formation, mission, and the place of universities.

The title of this paper and my introduction to this point may beg the question, “What do I mean by ‘majority world theological development,’ and by the concept of ‘university?’” Let me begin with a brief outline of my assumptions.

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First, what is a university? I assume that calling something a university implies an institution of some sort with four main elements: a way of delivering education, the content of that education, the recipients of the education, and the certification or authorization that is required to operate. All four elements, as we will see, have been understood and packaged in different ways.

And second, what is theological development? I will give more of my own view later, but for now, I am content to describe what I take to be the main paradigm, at least historically. I have the overwhelming impression that “theological education” and “theological development” have largely been making sure that the right theology was taught and absorbed by the recipients. Theological education was about “learning theology.” Underlying that aim seems to be a deeper assumption about theology—namely, that it is a thing or set of ideas that can be formulated and passed along as the right set of ideas.

Now for more detailed discussion, I will first give some brief historical observations. My intention is to provide perspective on what I see as the main elements in any effective majority world theological education.

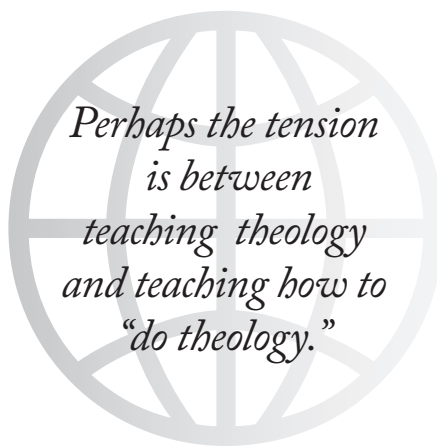
University, Part One: Delivery, Content, Recipients, and Certification

The Western university evolved from cathedral and monastic schools *for the clergy* in the late 11th century BCE. The university was originally a form established to serve the function of the education of church clergy, and theology was seen as the queen and capstone of the sciences. Of course, the assumption was that such schools would not tinker with the theological formulations of the church but merely pass them on.

The rise of humanism created a level of tension within the university model. On the one hand, it was the

assumptions underlying humanism which helped the reformers rediscover and re-articulate what they were convinced was the original gospel, and the original meaning of the biblical faith. On the other hand, these same seeds germinated into very different fruit, resulting in the so-called Enlightenment and an age of reason. Suffice it to say, that along the way, there was increasing expectation for the autonomy of the university, that it be separate from religious authority. Nevertheless, until the 19th century, theology and religion played significant roles in university curricula.

The role of religion was to decrease in the 19th century, and by the end of that century, the German university model



would spread around the world. It was influenced largely by Friedrich Schleiermacher’s ideas on the importance of freedom, the use of seminars as a teaching method, and the formation of experimental laboratories in universities. Such methodologies did not fit readily with the accepted assumptions relative to *theological* education.

Perhaps this tension could be simplified (even oversimplified): I would suggest it’s the difference between teaching (or learning) theology and teaching how to “do theology.”

Due at least in part to Schleiermacher, major changes for the university relative to the church and theological education emerged. First, some

universities continued to offer courses of theological study, but relegated these to separate schools attached to the larger university (e.g., Harvard, originally formed in 1636 to train people for ministry). The second was the growth of the seminary as a distinct “university” of higher learning with theological study as its primary focus, and often serving particular denominational movements. Third, other denominations largely abandoned the concern for “higher” education altogether and focused on Bible schools.

The unfortunate, overall, long-term result of each of these educational forms was the same: a separation of theological thinking and study and education from other fields of study. However, regardless of which approach was employed, the typical “form” of the university which we have been tracing assumes the centrality of a campus to which students travel and where they reside (or near which they reside), and at which faculty teach. The model assumes libraries, curricula, and certification/accreditation.

I loved that model. I enjoyed and still enjoy the feel of books and the sight of shelves lined with volumes crying out to be handled and read and pondered. Books are my friends. I feel warmed just by being in their presence. To this day, the feel of page and binding does far more to kindle my inner lamp than any actual Kindle version!

I also enjoyed the interaction with professors and students. Truth be told, I even liked the inherent (but oft denied) competitiveness of the environment. As such I learned to think, but in a context in which I gained particular affirmation by thinking in ways that inspired the approval of my professors. Gaining approval is not always conducive to fresh exploration.

During seminary, I learned to thrive in that world.¹ I missed it when I left to serve in a burnt-out steel town, and attempted to start a congregation from

among the quasi-homeless. It took me several years to relearn what had seemed so natural about ministry and discipleship prior to seminary.

Of course, there have been various attempts at developing forms and structures other than the centralized brick and mortar model based on universities. After four years in the urban church ministry environment, my wife and I and our daughters moved to South Asia. I came across the Theological Education by Extension movement (TEE) for the first time there in 1991.

Ralph Winter, one of the founding fathers of the TEE movement, developed TEE primarily as a new form aimed at addressing the issues of accessibility: language (local), location, cost, and the level of the material.

While TEE was certainly a new development, it did have its precursors. The University of London may have been the first *university* to offer distance learning *degrees*, beginning in 1858. The institution was non-denominational and, given the intense religious rivalries at the time, there was an outcry against the “godless” university. Thus, the paradigm of a distance learning university was specifically formed with a religious and theological concern as one of its prime motivations, namely to preserve the right theology.

The London model was about getting the right content. At first glance, TEE had the same objective. However, Winter’s TEE model did more than develop shifts in the form.

Winter also focused on the right kind of *student*: those actually engaged in ministry; who were proven, seasoned, already leaders; who had full-time jobs and families to support; and were thus generally unable to uproot and attend a centralized school, one formed on the university model, far from their ministry field. Such centralized schools tended instead to attract younger, inexperienced, and, as yet, unproven students.²

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I encountered TEE a second time, in a different South Asian country, in the context of serving alongside a movement to Christ among Muslims. Another partner to that work had urged the movement leadership to consider using TEE as a model for the theological training of their rapidly growing number of leaders. The material was already in use within more traditional churches, and was in the church version of the vernacular language. So, the suggestion was made to adapt the current TEE material by adapting the vocabulary to be more Muslim friendly.

Everything thus far in my background and training seemed to suggest that this extension model made sense. My experience in seminary had prepared me to love study and deeper learning. I also assumed that healthy movements of discipleship would require leaders trained in some way akin to the training I had been given. My experiences in urban ministry and among Muslims in South Asia had allowed me to see that there was something that needed to be changed, and suggested that TEE as a model, and an adapted TEE as a contextual version of that model, could serve as a better form than the bricks and mortar paradigm I had experienced.

Above, I suggested that the TEE model initially addressed only the *delivery mechanism*, the “form” of theological education, in order to render it more accessible. And, later, I noted that Winter focused on the *right type of students*. But, finally, I was wrestling with the *content*, although, so far, only at a very surface level (i.e., translation and adaptation of some vocabulary).

My journey had brought me to mention “delivery” models (centralized and distance), content (the presumed

“right” theological formulations in most cases), and recipients (what type of student). TEE suggested changes in all but content. But, in most cases, it did not address the fourth main feature of the university paradigm: certification and accreditation. And, in fact, much more needs to be said about both the content of the curricula and the issue of certification.

University, Part Two: A Focus on Content and Certification

Winter’s educational aptitude for TEE eventually took another shape, what I would call a university version, in the establishment of William Carey International University. WCIU was birthed as a distance university delivering *accredited* degrees of higher learning to students who would remain in their contexts of ministry and service.³ WCIU, then, was formed to address three of the elements I have been tracing: delivery (distance), recipient (engaged in ministry, proven), and certification (accredited degrees, formal education). What of content?

Winter and his colleagues developed a curriculum around a historical “spine” to which “rib bones” of archaeological, anthropological, biblical, theological, political and religious perspectives could be attached. This “World Christian Foundations” core forms the basis for WCIU’s MA program. This way of approaching the material was in a very real sense also a way to reintegrate the academic disciplines that had been disintegrated into distinct fields of study with the development of the university over time.⁴

Meanwhile, in South Asia, I was growing increasingly uneasy with the TEE model. I sensed that something more profound than translation and contextual adjustment was needed.

To use a metaphor that some of my Asian colleagues coined, the content themselves, even after adaptation, just “smelled strange.”

I began to search for something else. About that time, around the year 2000 or 2001, I was introduced to the work of BILD (Biblical Institute of Leadership Development) and the CBTE movement (Church Based Theological Education).⁵

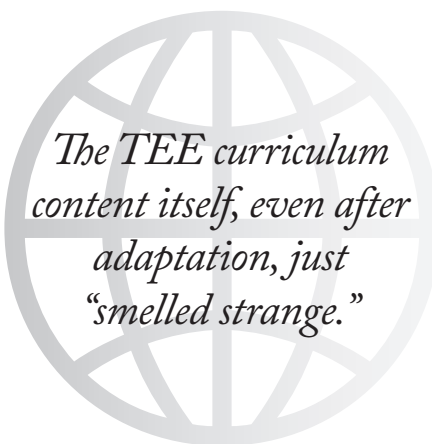
At first glance, many have assumed that CBTE was just another version of TEE. And CBTE does share some of the facets of the TEE methodology relative to training that could be de-centralized. CBTE aims to return theological education to “the church,” and tends to eschew the central seminary model not only for reasons of inaccessibility, but also for a structural lack of accountability to the church.

However, at its core, the CBTE paradigm is re-forming the content and the understanding of certification in ways that the TEE model did not do.

CBTE addresses the question of theological development, and the content of theological formation, in a direct way. One of the main *courses*, but also one of the main *outcomes* for CBTE, is the development of “biblical theology in culture.” While formed by the Western theological development and creedal formulations (a clear emphasis in the materials on the first 300 years of the church shapes the paradigm), CBTE sought to return the theological process to the ongoing hermeneutic of the church community in its own context, addressing its own needs, and developing its own movement, rooted in “the way of Christ and the Apostles.”⁶ As such, in many ways the courses and content were (in my words and experience) like a “Trojan horse,” which used a form of theological education to unleash a whole different way of thinking and theologizing, by encouraging the development of a biblical theology in culture.⁷

CBTE also aimed at re-formation of the certification process, focusing on *church certification* for their own leadership. This was woven into the CBTE process, rather than the typical *seminary or university accreditation* model. I was fully convinced this was needed. I still am.

However, in seeking to actually develop a CBTE based theological education and formation model in Asia among Muslims, I became aware that many of the Asian leadership felt that somehow, no matter how much I explained the weaknesses of the received accreditation model and the advantages of the church certification model we were developing, it just felt



“second class” to my Asian colleagues. One went so far as to say,

Kevin, you went to seminary, but you tell us we don’t need that here. It feels like you are saying we are not good enough.

My actual meaning was the exact opposite!

I learned the hard lesson. The largely Western, and more specifically American, model of accreditation weighed large in the desires and hopes of the majority world. An accredited degree, even a bad one, somehow felt “real.” A different type of certification, even when a much better education and process, felt second class.⁸

Theological Formation: Back to Delivery, Content, Recipients, and Certification

All of the narrative above, shared as an abbreviated form of my own journey, finally matured and coalesced into some basic instincts about theology, education, and how to go about it. The combination of my experiences in a Muslim context, seeking to equip leaders of movements to Christ, my reflections on language and culture, my encounters with seminaries and TEE and CBTE, and attempts to solve the issues of certification, all combine to drive what I am beginning to envision for the future. That vision is now shaped by my current role with WCIU. I should also say, it is shaped by WCIU’s history and reasons for existence, and by my vision for how that will both continue and change in the future.

Delivery: Blended (Distance and “Centers”)

Although WCIU is clearly in the blood lines of the distance education movement, we are not strictly speaking about an online university. Our MA students certainly use the internet, and our technology platform supports this, but over the last year or more our academic leadership implemented a delivery model that incorporated cohorts, and thus an element of “class” or community.

As such, WCIU’s current model is a hybrid: distance, but with live interaction; a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning.

As we continue to press into improvement, another concern we have is to assure that the element of mentor/apprentice in the learning process is not lost.

There are a number of educational reasons for this focus on cohorts (communities) and mentors. But I would suggest that an at least equally important factor is that there is a spiritual

dimension to the process of theological formation. And the spiritual life is almost never one that is cultivated to full health when isolated or apart from “life to life” experience with others.

It should include those who journey together, and those who may have journeyed ahead of us and know some of the trickier parts to navigate.

Delivery: “Micro-breweries”

The micro-brewery “movement” is but one expression of a trend in the world: locally sourced, low footprint, fair trade, etc. One way forward for WCIU’s delivery methodology is to encourage “micro-universities” which do not seek to build buildings or gather libraries or any of the traditional forms of the centralized institution, but which do foster a community of learning along the lines of the old guild model of apprentices and masters.

The faculty (“masters” with the degrees and field experience), the materials studied, the languages, the topics of research, and the financial models, all would include educational equivalents of low footprint, fair trade, and local sourcing.

This is a way to press the cohort model further, and to build cohorts as often as possible around some degree of closer geographic proximity, not to a campus, but to fellow students and a network of associated mentors. In some cases, these “micro-universities” may end up being created by enterprising students who apply and are tasked with finding fellows for their cohorts, and even with proposing potential faculty (which then would be screened by WCIU).

However, in some cases, WCIU may proceed by developing an international network of associated universities, with WCIU adding value through advising and adding to curriculum development, equipping faculty, and adding WCIU’s “brand” to a local institution (in accord with agreed criteria). Such a network would also open avenues for

The delivery system of a “micro-university” would be like a micro-brewery: locally sourced, low footprint, fair trade.

a mutual, global learning environment within the network and between its associated schools.

Delivery: “Amazon Distribution Center”

A number of business models depend on efficient, regional, distribution hubs. Amazon is but one. In many ways, Amazon is a retail version of a distance university, but without the cohorts. Amazon’s effectiveness depends upon its distribution centers, perhaps even more than its web technology for receiving orders.

For the “micro-university” and “network of associated schools” to provide real value and deliver effectively, the university as distribution center is a crucial element in the structure. Operationally and academically, such hubs need to provide effective IT and bandwidth, educational support to improve faculty skills and methods, curricula expertise, adept translation resources following “best practices,” financial models that are fair for faculty and student and balanced with sources from tuitions, global scholarship sources and other “friends” of the university, and well managed endowments.

Important as some of these developments may be, they are not radical innovations. And they address only the delivery of education. Far more critical is the question of what a university like WCIU should deliver.

Content: Beyond Translation and the Need for New Theological Encyclopedias

In the discussion about TEE and CBTE I made the observation that contextualization of theological education was prone to end with translation and minor adaption, but did not really mold “content.”

Western theological formation and education has tended to approach its task as one of ensuring that the “right” results were achieved by schools, as measured by the assurance that the students could articulate their theological positions in accordance with a received tradition. I say “a” tradition because the particular expression of that has varied by denominational and theological heritage: Reformed, Arminian, Anabaptist, Pentecostal, Anglican, Roman, Eastern, etc.

I want to hasten to state that I am not suggesting that these received traditions are wrong. I stand firmly in their stream as a convinced believer. What I do suggest, however, with equal conviction, is that these are all contextual expressions of biblical truths. They have been lived and tested from within long historical roots, and they reflect the original contexts of their birth, as well as their subsequent histories. As one example, a glance at Anglicanism’s 39 Articles will suffice to show how certain articles are rooted in the debates of the English Reformation.

I would venture that the same is true even for the classic creeds. How much detail is given in these christological formulations, yet how little they elucidate a theology of the Spirit, is a clear demonstration of the contextual issues in which the framers of the creeds operated. And rightly so.

In Asia, as I have mentioned, I have had the chance to work alongside leaders of emerging movements in Muslim contexts. Naturally, we began with deeper and deeper explorations of Scripture, and we worked to the place where the leaders were eager to know how various Christian teachings had emerged, what they were, and how and why there were different Christian churches.

So, I mustered the materials for us, and we began to work through the ways that the “faith” was passed along within the apostolic era, then in the era of the creeds, and then the later Protestant confessions.⁹ I had to translate as we went, as nothing we were studying was available in their languages. I did add some materials that the local Christian communities had translated. Most of that had also originated in the west.

As we worked through this historic examination of theology, creeds, and confessions of faith, it became clear to me and to them that as important and crucial as all these stages were, there were multiple examples in which the largely Western theological traditions we studied as we made our journey were answering questions that were not those of our context, and of course, never addressing some of the crucial questions which were very real.

The fact was that we were trying to do theological education with an incomplete “encyclopedia.” We had access to the theological encyclopedia of the Protestant west, some of it translated in one of the major local languages. But for theological education to really develop, I came to conclude that we needed two major changes.

First, we needed to add to the encyclopedia from a wider orb of local sources: Islamic theological thought in the region, Sufi spirituality, local folk traditions and songs, etc. It goes without saying, of course, that none of that would be in English or in any of the so-called theological languages.

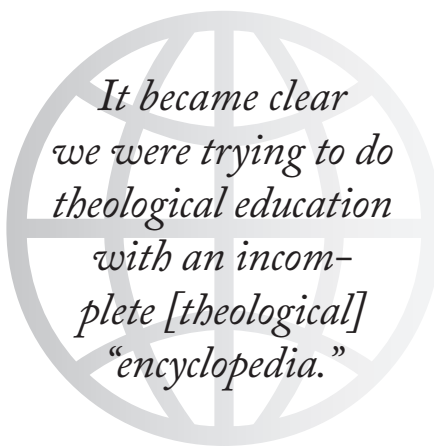
Second, we needed to adjust our thinking about the end result of such education. Instead of thinking how we could emerge with our leaders able to give assent to the formulations of faith as contextualized in the Western traditions, we needed to aim at the emergence of *authentically biblical theologies in culture*.¹⁰ And that required *delivery of a process*, not delivery of the end re-

sult of a process undertaken elsewhere, in another context with different questions and needs.

Of course, these new encyclopedias can only be developed from within the “micro-universities” I have described, and not from the “distribution center.” However, the latter can and must be shaped to help serve the former. Before proceeding, I feel a need to address another aspect of the content of theological education.

Content: Reintegration of Theology

I briefly alluded to the disintegration of theology as a discipline, as a casualty of the rise of the university model.



Theology not only was dethroned as “queen” of the sciences, but also all of the disciplines became increasingly studied in isolation. Theology, and theological students, had less and less connection with political science, economics, biology, medicine, law, history, literature, the arts, etc. A similar disintegration took place within theology itself as disciplines such as biblical studies, systematics, church history, and pastoral theology were taught in varying degrees of separation.

The CBTE movement attempted a reintegration of the theological disciplines, developing courses and curricula that wove the various fields of learning together as much as possible.

In the CBTE process, that integration occurs around particular courses built around themes as the “spine.” Ralph Winter’s earliest innovations within WCIU’s curriculum were more aggressive, built around a chronological spine, as he included more disciplines as “ribs” than the BILD curricula.

In Winter’s later years, what I have called the integration of theology took another turn as he began to focus more and more on what came to be called “kingdom missiology.” This approach holds at its heart the conviction that God’s mission is for all creation, that therefore every aspect of restoring a lost and rebellious planet is the proper concern of missiology, and that every aspect of creation has been assaulted by a vicious enemy, and hence mission in all its dimensions is also spiritual warfare.

In the last decade, shaped in large part by this framework, WCIU has continued to build its programs around the historical approach and missiological center of its founding focus.¹¹ But WCIU has also increasingly positioned its missiological core as a philosophy of international development, and as such, positioned its degrees as degrees in international development, built on the vision that all theology is missiology, that missiology addresses every aspect of God’s mission, that God’s mission addresses every aspect of God’s creation, and thus, that missiology is the fullest expression of development, and development is only complete if it is also missiology.¹²

This entire approach has been encapsulated within the first of the five competencies which WCIU aims to pass on to our students:

The ability to apply insights gained from the understanding and integration of biblical, cultural, historical, and applied research in addressing the social challenges they face as part of an agency, organization, or institution working in a particular social context.

While not couched in overtly missiological terms, that summarizes an

aim to foster the ability within our students to think and work missiologically, and theologically, in holistic ways. To summarize thus far, I am suggesting a blended model for the delivery of distance education. And I am suggesting a model which aims to develop and employ new encyclopedias of theology, which recovers a fully integrated approach to theology as missiology, and missiology as development, in large part by educating men and women to “do theology” rather than simply “learn theology.” This, of course, assumes there are recipients of this content.

Recipients: Leaders of Emerging Movements (Mission and Pioneer)

Since I am focusing on WCIU as a means by which I want to speak to the wider vision of theological education and majority world, I will limit myself in this section to interacting with Ralph Winter.

We have already seen that the TEE movement focused largely on church pastors in majority world contexts, the proven and actual leaders, as opposed to “students.” This emphasis on the needs of local leaders, especially in church movements, remained crucial for Winter over time. As he stated it in 2003, more than 20 years after founding WCIU:

There are about two million functional pastors who can't formally qualify for ordination, or who are mostly not ordained simply because they cannot practically penetrate the formal mechanism of theological education even if it might be theoretically accessible to them.¹³

Meeting the needs of those (potential) students was a primary motivation. And Winter's main critique of seminaries and Bible schools and universities was that they failed to do so:

... many of them are more concerned to keep their enrollment up than they

This type of “biblical theology in culture” will be critical... and the curricula that can best serve that process does not yet exist.

are to find and educate—by whatever means necessary—the actual, real, mature, gifted leaders in their associated church movements. It is not a question of whether we think of humble Bible schools or well-endowed seminaries, the key question is whether or not they are offering access to the real leaders of their movement.¹⁴

At the same time, Winter was also focused on another type of student, the cross-cultural missionary.

...if we don't train the missionary in the field we slow down the frontier missions movement. This is of critical importance as we race toward the end of this century.¹⁵

Indigenous leaders of church movements in the majority world and cross-cultural workers formed the main audience for WCIU originally. With the subsequent insight about missiology and development, the vocabulary used by WCIU to describe its main intended recipients also shifted from pastors and missionaries, to “men and women working at the roots of human problems.”

This was more than semantics. I wish to make two comments.

First, the shift in no way implies a move away from a focus on serving the “right students” as defined by those who were actively engaged in their fields of service. That has not changed.

Second, the shift implies a way of speaking that incorporates the fullness of the theology-as-missiology-as-development matrix described above. As such, the intended student body of WCIU of course continues to include the real leaders of churches and church movements, the cross-cultural missionary regardless of their home sending country and culture, and thus the majority world.

But WCIU also understands its intended student to include students working within various relief and development agencies, small business development, translation and communication, leadership development, the sciences and health, and so on.

Those additional focal points are the basis of a number of envisioned concentrations and degree programs we aim to launch, but they should in no way be seen as a dilution of the focus of WCIU. Quite the contrary, it is in fact the sharpened focus on the nature of missiology, and the extent of God's missional calling, which shapes these changes as we initiate them in the future.¹⁶

However, there are two major challenges to this approach, and to serving these intended students well. One is a religious challenge, the other, a linguistic one.

The religious challenge (if I may use that term) relates to the fact that a number of the students needing the type of approach to theological education described above, both in terms of delivery and content, are those currently leading so-called insider movements (and more importantly perhaps, those they are training to lead in the future). The type of “biblical theology in culture” described above will be critical, the new encyclopedias needed will have to partially come from their contexts to be effective, and the curricula that can best serve that process does not yet exist.

In addition, the linguistic challenge looms massive. At present, WCIU is primarily offered in English, and requires a level of proficiency that the “real leaders” we seek to serve simply cannot manage. We have made great strides in Korean and Chinese. But the fact remains, that if our delivery assumes

English, then our content will have to be in English, and thus the students will be restricted only to those who can manage English. That would spell death to the vision of new encyclopedias and new biblical theologies in culture.

Thus, as we look to the students of our future, our vision includes at least a dozen of the major languages of the world. That means not just translation and languages of instruction, as should be clear by now.

However, this surfaces another challenge: certification.

Certification: The Contextual Trojan Horse—and New Models

The CBTE model advocated a return to a model of certification that located the “certification” process itself within the “church,” and initially at least, was less concerned about matters of accreditation associated with typical universities. To be very honest, in an ideal world, I would have been in full agreement.

In fact, in many arenas, especially in the tech world, there is a major shift going on relative to certification. My oldest daughter works at an online university which makes no pretense that it is accredited. It does not even use the classic terminology for its degrees (BA, MA, etc.), preferring instead to grant “nano degrees” in highly specialized niche areas of expertise. Students are flocking to it. Companies are as well, to hire the graduates. What matters to both the students, and the companies hiring them, is not an accredited degree but an ability to do something real in the marketplace.

There is evidence that these types of competency-based certification are growing, and that more and more leaders in education are calling for change and questioning the current models. One of my colleagues at WCIU put it this way:

...“training to competence” is more important than offering courses leading to a “degree” and the prestige and social status which that can generate.

In other words, those competing most effectively in the markets will be those who have demonstrated competence in specific or specialized fields, regardless of where they got their training. Training institutions whose graduates demonstrate competence will be the winners of the future.¹⁷

I couldn’t agree more. But the mention of prestige and social status is worth noting. Let us consider for a moment the primary target audience of a university like WCIU, and its mention in the title of this paper: the majority world. The hunger for education is largely a hunger that is growing for Western education, and some version of official accreditation as a sign of the quality and status gained by it.



Even the main initiator of CBTE, the BILD organization, has had to make room for partnership with universities to be able to attain some form of outside certification and accreditation. And WCIU is renewing its accreditation as I write.

Why? Primarily because it is demanded “in the market.”

This is why my section heading refers to accreditation as a “contextual Trojan horse.” I mean by this the idea that in order to smuggle innovations into curricula, develop new encyclopedias, and create new delivery methodologies in a way that will in fact attract the students we actually wish to serve (and who will help to develop those new

encyclopedias), we need to contextualize our institution within the expected form: an accredited university. And, perhaps at some stage, even a further form is possible, as a university able to grant its “seal of approval” to a whole network of schools internationally.¹⁸

Conclusion: A Role for the University?

I have covered the main points as I see them, but now hope to conclude by wrapping them more tightly and clearly together. There have been two main themes: theological development in the majority world, and the role universities might take in that process.

I have suggested that the university model has essentially four major functional components: delivery, content, recipients, and certification. I have explored centralized versus distance models for delivery. The ideas considered here are hardly revolutionary.

I have also tried to articulate that there is a need for a dramatic overhaul relative to the content, or curricula, and its aims. Here I believe that my advocacy for education focused on “doing theology” instead of learning it, for new theological encyclopedias, and for biblical theologies in culture, will prove more challenging to some of my readers.

I have discussed taking Ralph Winter’s ideas about the “right students” a bit further than he did. In addition to leaders of church movements and cross-cultural missionaries, I added leaders of so-called insider movements, and those they would in turn seek to equip.

And I have suggested an approach to certification that would treat accreditation as a contextual factor. I might even use the term “a necessary evil,” though that might be too strong. The fact remains that many of those we would most hope to serve will come to us seeking a type of accreditation that many of us are alternatively coming to see as either altogether unnecessary, or deliverable in more creative ways.

All of that combines to provide a description of what I mean by theological development in the majority world. It also suggests a subversive role via the university, as a Trojan horse which can sneak a whole new way of doing theology inside the city gates. I have a hunch that once inside, the entire model of theological education as we know it might be re-formed from the inside out. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ I attended Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (now simply Trinity School for Ministry) in Ambridge, PA, from 1982 through 1986, including a year away from school in Uganda. It was and is a wonderful place, full of godly people.

² Dr. Winter's ideas about the content of education would emerge later.

³ Thus, William Carey International University was birthed. Some of Winter's earliest descriptions speak of the content being that of a seminary, "seminary in a suitcase," for busy people "on the go"; such language was largely abandoned over time and the purposes have been articulated differently as time passed and his thinking progressed. See below, and also www.wciu.edu for more current descriptions.

⁴ Space does not allow a full discussion of this, but in summary: as distinct fields of learning grew within the university model over time, history, theology, biblical studies, sciences, etc., were more and more taught in isolation from other disciplines. The WCIU core curriculum seeks to reintegrate the various disciplines around a historical framework.

⁵ I owe a great debt to Jeff Reed and his team at BILD. While my own thinking and approach has led me in different directions, I gained a great deal, and the training and formation process we put in place within Asia and in a church planting context in the USA were shaped profoundly by BILD. See www.bild.org for more about BILD.

⁶ Having said that, it must be added that CBTE also assumes that such a hermeneutical cycle will result in particular forms of church and expressions of faith, rooted in what Paul calls his "tradition."

⁷ As I began to implement CBTE in Asia, I was particularly impressed by the emphasis on developing local theology. What I found, however, in most CBTE movements using the BILD process in various countries, was a tendency to merely

translate and use the courses. In effect, this rendered CBTE just another (improved perhaps) TEE version.

⁸ I believe BILD faced these same issues and I understand they have developed partnerships to address the accreditation issues.

⁹ I found several of the courses in the BILD Leadership Series extremely helpful for the comparison of apostolic and later approaches in those early centuries. In particular, the course "Essentials of Sound Doctrine," demonstrates the manner in which Paul's epistles kept "doctrine" and "life" closely woven together in passing on the faith, whereas (later) by the time of the creeds, the emphasis had shifted almost fully to having the right concepts.

¹⁰ I have adapted this phrase from a major BILD course, "Towards a Theology in Culture," where I was also first introduced to the concept of theological encyclopedias.

¹¹ To illustrate the missiological core in Winter's vision for WCIU, I cite these words, "The Institute of International Studies, (Training Division of the U.S. Center for World Mission) has developed a completely field-based MA program with a missiological orientation. It is designed by mission scholars and is intended for serious Christians who seek to declare the glory of God among the nations."

¹² These are my own expressions, though it is likely obvious that I am "channeling" the thinking of Karl Barth and Ralph Winter in my own mix here.

¹³ Winter, Ralph D., "The Largest Stumbling Block to Leadership Development in the Local Church," *IJFM*, 20:3, Fall 2003, 88.

¹⁴ Winter, 92.

¹⁵ In an article from *Mission Frontiers* Nov-Dec 1992, on the theme of building the mission bridge, accessed September 2017, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/archive/building-the-mission-bridge>.

¹⁶ This description I am offering does not overlook the fact that in WCIU's history, there has not always been this sort of holistic approach to missiology and theology and development, or to the students we seek to serve. For example, here is a description of the type of student WCIU assumed would be interested: those serious about the cause of missions; those headed toward the mission field who want to start training here and finish there; those called to mission mobilization; those already serving on the mission field; those in leadership in national churches who want basic biblical, theological and missiological training without coming to the United States.

¹⁷ Jonathan Lewis, in an email correspondence, August 2017. Jonathan is WCIU's Chief Academic Officer.

¹⁸ As early as 1836, there were attempts at models for addressing accreditation in distance forms. The University of London developed a compromise solution, for example, in which the sole authority to conduct the examinations leading to degrees would be given to a new officially recognized entity called the University of London, which would act as examining body for the University of London colleges, originally University College London and King's College London, and award their students University of London degrees.