

A NEW HERMENEUTIC FOR DOING THEOLOGY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

Doing theology can take its cue from Mary, mother of Jesus. Theology is words about God; witnessing about an encounter with God. Theology comes at the second hour (Steuernagel 2003:103). Revelation comes first: God's mission erupts through the words of the messenger disclosing how the reign of God will be born in the womb of a believer. When Mary answered: "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said" she was doing theology. Theology is a womb thing, it takes place in the deepest place where life is born (:100). It leads to rejoicing and worship. The Magnificat is worship from the first Christian congregation ... where the majority of believers were women too.

The article argues that we need a new hermeneutic for doing theology in seminaries and for the development of the curriculum that it teaches. Eventually seminaries live by the grace of congregations. Congregations are places of worship where people to whom God has revealed Himself gather and to whom God has given the message, the Good News, about his kingdom, a kingdom that differs radically from those of this world. Congregational worship meetings are launching platforms, from where people become church as they reach out into the world with the Good News about Jesus Christ. A good example is the stable where Jesus was born. It's a place where the journey with Jesus Christ begins. The real training of leaders happens on the road, in the public spaces of life.

It is clear that Jesus' ministry concentrated on leadership development. His first and most important disciple was his mother, Mary. Cultural patriarchal curtains hide a lot about their relationship – but she was the first visiting professor, according to John 2, when Jesus started training the 12 at a wedding in Cana in Galilee.

With these remarks I have indicated the theological parameters with which I will work in this paper about responsive training. The general idea is that we need seminaries with contextual curricula and responsive training. The important marker here is: just as theology comes at the second hour so seminaries came much later. Responsive training and curriculum development are conceived spiritually, it is a walk-with-God thing (Steuernagel 2003:100, Keifert 2009:15). Without the Holy Spirit's life giving presence there is no life, no real theology. Worship is a close second, look at Mary and Elizabeth – they were rejoicing in worship. Worship clears the mind and opens the heart for curriculum development and responsive training. Elisha's question to his slave Gehazi "Where are you coming from?" (2 Kings 5:25) may guide us in asking the question about the origin and character of seminaries!!

¹This article originated as a paper given at Brackenhurst, Limuru, Kenya at a meeting of the Overseas Council's *Institute for Excellence in Christian Leadership Development* on responsive training (4-7 May 2010). It was further shaped by papers given at NetACT's curriculum development workshops for staff members of twelve seminaries first in Lilongwe, Malawi & then at Lubango, Angola in January 2011.

2 UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

African theologians and seminary staff are confronted with new realities and challenges that are not addressed by the curricula that they are teaching. I want to draw a few brief lines to map the problem with which we are confronted before indicating some parameters of the challenging journey of discovering new avenues for theological education and responsive training.

History helps one to understand the problem. Lamin Sanneh asked: *Whose religion is Christianity?* (2003). Jenkins' trilogy (2002, 2006, 2009) explained: the heartland of Christianity is moving South. The decline of Christendom with its strong European DNA structure is a reality (Bosch 1991:274-5; Guder 1998:5-6). In the Western theological world, from where we in Africa inherited our theology, the story of theology and the importance of professional theological training at universities goes back to the Reformation and Enlightenment (see Farley 1983, Kelsey 1992; Keifert 2009:14-17). Intellectually the Reformation had to confront aspects of erroneous doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church. As such it needed well schooled clergy that were able to empower the laity with biblical and dogmatic knowledge in order to confront the Roman Catholic Church. During the Enlightenment period theology had to compete with the growing rationalism in a world that was moving away from superstition. Books were printed, people became literate and the natural sciences proved superstition wrong. Non-verifiable belief became a private affair (Bosch 1991:266). Suddenly theology was one of many academic disciplines and fighting for a fair share of power and respect in the university-world.

At the same time most European nations were involved in colonial enterprises and needed the support of their respective churches. The missionary movement had a major impact on the church. In universities and seminaries leaders were trained to lead the faithful in pursuit of Christendom ideals and dreams. Nation states were building empires and needed the legitimizing support from their national churches. Eventually, in 1914 and again in 1939, there was war. These devastating wars were followed by a cold war. Unspeakable atrocities, suffering and pain were experienced. It led to the demise of the church in the West. The church was compromised and discredited. The seminary is a product of this history carrying its discredited DNA structure in its bones and fibre.

3 THE CONTEXT HAS CHANGED

The globalized world requires a new paradigm in leadership and training. I want to explain this by referring to the basic hypothesis of the most quoted sociologist and highly respected intellectual leader Manuel Castells. I will be referring to the second book of his trilogy on *The information age: economy, society and culture, The Power of identity* (2004).

Castells describes how the world is changing in this period of late modernity through the combined impact of globalization, informationalization and technology. Information technology based on the Worldwide Web (www) is restructuring the economy and capitalism as well as society. The networking form of organization and its varied forms of communication, its flexibility and power is transforming society, culture and the way we experience time and space. We have a new world characterized by the networked society in which social movements are the main actors. Social movements² construct identity.

²**Social movements are:** *purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society. Since there is no sense of history other than the history that we sense, from an analytical perspective, there is no "good" or "bad," progressive or regressive social movements (Castells 2004:3-4)*

Castells' (2004:7-8) basic hypothesis is that the social construction of identity and the content of that identity take place in a context marked by power relationships. Identity is formed in one of three ways:

1. **Legitimizing identity**: is generated by civil society and introduced by the dominant institutions of a society and those in authority. It works top-down and dominates. It is illustrated by the nation-state and the Christendom church. It is driven by ideology.
2. **Resistance identity**: is generated by those actors who are devalued / stigmatized by the logic of domination. They form communities or political parties or rebel groups in order to resist unbearable opposition / oppression and build upon already existing identities defined by history, geography, biology, belief, race / ethnicity etc. It is a defensive identity and is best illustrated by religious fundamentalism like the Religious Right in the USA and, in the world of Islam, Al-Qaeda. It is mostly motivated by anger and fear.
3. **Project identity**: is built when social actors build a new identity that redefines their position in society and by doing so, seek the transformation of the overall social structure. Examples are feminism and the ecological movements. This identity produces subjects. **Subjects are not individuals but the collective social actors** through which the individual reach a holistic meaning in his / her experience. It is mostly motivated by a justice-based intellectual dream and inspires hope.

The short outline of modern Western history above serves to illustrate that the legitimizing identity formation of the European nation-states and their Christendom denominational partners are now discredited. In retrospect it is clear how they manipulated the minds and cultures of people, exploiting them to benefit their scramble for political and economic power and empire building. The opposing interests and ideologies eventually led to war.

One thing is clear from Castells' analysis: power is in the process of being redefined (2004:424-5). It is moving from physical power to intellectual power; from Macht (German) or Might to Mind; from guns to information. Power has moved to the network society where there are two major actors. The first is the power elite. Castells calls them globapolitans, they are the people that controls the flow of money, the main financial actors in the informationalized global neo-capitalistic economy. The second major player is social movements – of which the church can be one! It will, however, have a radically different identity than that of Christendom.

In *The power of identity* (Castells 2004) describes how the different identity formation processes works, illustrating them with case studies from all continents. With information technology becoming available to all people, power balances shift. Urbanization is accelerating all over the world. People form new social networks in order to face new challenges. The nation state is in demise³, democracy is under attack and patriarchy, the founding structure of all contemporary societies, built on the power and authority of men over women and children, is experiencing an irreversible transformation. The structure and culture of families are changing worldwide. Nothing seems to be the same any longer.

4 UPLOADING: HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITIES

Brian McLaren remarked (2000:11): “If you have a new world, you need a new church. You have a new world.” The cultural tectonic plates of our world are shifting. Thomas Friedman's

³ Walls' (2002:104-110) views on the nation-state from a historian's point of view are interesting when he speculates about a “post-nation-state” situation where movements may play a more significant role.

bestseller *The world is flat* (2007) helped me to understand one of the most fundamental implications of this shift for the church and theological education. The book is a vivid collection of stories illustrating to which extent the economic playing field was levelled. The world became a village. Friedman used a different hermeneutic to confirm what Castells explained in sociological terminology. The first of his ten “flatteners” was the fall of the Berlin wall 11/9/1989... being the tipping point that unleashed forces (social movements) that ultimately liberated countless people, the first of the major breakthroughs brought about by the information revolution that started in the mid-1980’s (2007:51-55).

I found the fourth flattener the most important one to understand. It is about harnessing the power of communities. He defines uploading as (Friedman 2007:95):

The newfound power of individuals and communities to send up, out, and around their own products and ideas, often for free, rather than passively downloading them from commercial enterprises or traditional hierarchies, is fundamentally reshaping the flow of creativity, innovation, political mobilization and information gathering and dissemination. It is making each of these things a bottom-up and globally side-to-side phenomenon, not exclusively a top-down one. ... Uploading is, without doubt, becoming one of the most revolutionary forms of collaboration in the flat world. More than ever, we can all now be producers, not just consumers.

This is a major new trend with enormous potential for congregations and seminaries alike. Friedman says (2007:96): “Our communication infrastructure has taken only the first steps in this great shift from audience to participants, but that is where it will go in the next decade.” The top-down view is replaced by a **bottom-up** and especially **side-to-side** movement. It is a **revolution** of collaboration: users become **producers**, not just **consumers**. **It is a massively emancipating** move. The best illustration of the paradigm difference is to compare the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, authored by specialists and highly qualified academics to the achievement of Wikipedia a network based encyclopaedia being a collaborative effort by voluntary participants that within a very short time outstripped the EB in becoming the most used and biggest source of reference (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page downloaded 26-2-2010)⁴. Rearranging this in Castells’ sociological categories one can say that legitimizing identity formation is replaced by the power that social networks and movements have to pursue project identity formation.

The best illustration of this phenomenon in Africa may well be the intensely emotional conflict that most mainline denominations are experiencing in worship liturgy. The liturgy was directed strictly according to the prescribed order from the pulpit by an ordained minister. Mass prayer changed all of this (Soko 2010)⁵. Audiences became participating producers forming social networks which one can visually see as people are sending one another SMS’s. We are on our way to understand something about rethinking curricula and responsive training and the power of congregations where the Spirit of God is active.

5 A NEW HERMEUTIC FOR SEMINARY AND CONGREGATION

⁴ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page: Welcome to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit. There were 3,205,877 articles in English (August 2010).

⁵ Soko’s doctoral dissertation dealt with the schisms in the Reformed Church in Zambia. Pentecostal and charismatic influences (Kalu 2008) are changing the liturgy of mainline denominations. Mass prayer depicts these tendencies. Mass prayer that leads to chaos should surely be addressed with the principles of 1 Cor 11-14. The church in Africa needs teaching! However, the paradigm has changed and theological training & curricula have to take cognisance of it. The pulpit is no longer the castle of a king and a one-man-show!

Uploading as harnessing the power of community, of social networks where people are participants and not simply an audience, should ring a few theological bells starting by hearing 1 Cor 12 loud and clear! Apply this phenomenon to the history of the expansion of Christianity and suddenly the light go on. Andrew Walls' *The cross-cultural process in Christian history* (2002) helped me to understand the growth and decline patterns between North and South as well as in the course of history. In short he illustrates four patterns in history:

1. "The Christian story ... is not a steady triumphant progression; it is a story of advance and recession." (12)
2. "Christian faith must go on being translated, must continuously enter into the vernacular culture and interact with it, or it withers and fades" (:29).
3. Islamic expansion is progressive; Christian expansion is serial (30). The heartland of Christianity moved from Jerusalem to Asia-Minor, to Africa, to Europe. It is moving from the North to the South. No church, no place, no culture owns Christ (66).
4. A significant feature of the demographic and cultural shifts in the Christian centre of gravity is that each threatened eclipse of Christianity was averted by its cross-cultural diffusion. Crossing boundaries have been the life blood of historic Christianity. The energy for these crossings has come from the periphery rather than the centre (67).

In his discussion Acts 15 plays a major role. Paul and Barnabas met with the apostles in Jerusalem and the "synod" decided not to make proselytes⁶ but to entrust converts with the gospel. Conversion meant turning to Christ and following Him regardless of your language, culture, place or sexuality. The Ephesian letter is a prime example of handling the cross-cultural process. Where this happens, the gospel takes root in new soil and grows! Sanneh (2003) illustrates how this happened in Africa after the missionaries left (circa 1962). Between 1970 and 1985 Africa saw 16,500 conversions a day with Christianity numerically overtaking Islam (2003:15). It had its own leaders, sang its own music, preached in the vernacular and worshiped and grew by the multiplication on congregational level – with *very* little seminary involvement at all (Cox 1995:243-262). The growth of the church in Africa is in sociological terminology social networks working on the uploading principle even before the heyday of the information revolution. Christianity is a religious social movement. Congregations that proclaim the Gospel in their own culture are busy with, again in sociological jargon, *project identity formation*. The project is local manifestations of the Kingdom of God, is being drawn into the *missio Dei*⁷ (Bosch 1991:389, Guder 1998:81-82).

6 CONCLUSION: "SEE" THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The argument will now be summarized: What we see is the decline of the Christendom variation of Christianity. We understand that it has major fault lines in its epistemology and was discredited in history. The seminary is a product of Christendom; it usually forms proselytes for a denomination and for Western theology.

Theologically we see the Acts 15 principle, the power of the cross-cultural dissemination of Christianity taking place in Africa. The church is growing. Millions of Marys, Elizabeths and

⁶A proselyte was someone who was circumcised and who was to adopt the Jewish tradition and obey the Torah. It means he (sic!) has to leave his own culture behind and convert to a new culture.

⁷*Missio Dei* literally means the mission of God. It is God's agenda for the world. This is what the church should discern and be involved in: God's agenda. The problem with the Christendom paradigm was that it was ideological agendas of denominations and nations that influenced the agenda of congregations.

Zechariahs are breaking out in song and worship all over our continent. They are doing theology, because they experienced the presence and power of God. They are forming congregations, they need discipling.

The point should be clear: we have a new world. We have a new church. We need a new approach to leadership development, to the formation of prophets and apostles for the church. Discipling needs a contextual reformulation for our day and age. The key to it will be in the congregations where the Spirit is moving, where Mary and Elizabeth – later followed by Zechariah when he got his voice back – are singing and worshipping because they have been in the presence of their Saviour. They are an example of responsive training, they were taught with a completely different curriculum compared to that of synagogue stuff! Note: project identity formation took place: the project was living and proclaiming of the Kingdom of God.

7 DISCOVERING A MISSIONAL HERMENEUTIC

Simply summarized: seminaries with a Christendom DNA structure are doomed to die. They train proselytes; they are following the principles of legitimizing identity formation and are focused on denominational survival. There is no future there⁸. Don't continue to go that way. One should take our cue from Mary, the mother of Jesus. Doing theology is getting engaged with the *missio Dei*.

What I am saying is that if we study missional congregations and our attitude is one of humility and an openness to listen to countless Marys, Elizabeths and Zecharais in Africa, we might be taken on a journey where we can learn something about responsive training, about how seminaries (if we chose to continue to use the word) can train leaders that will be able to upload and form social movements called congregations where project identity formation envisaging the Kingdom takes place. We have a new world, we need a new church. A new church will eventually spawn a new form of theological training.

Five of us who are involved in the SAPMC⁹ gave papers at the Jan 2010 meeting of SAMS (South African Missiological Society) in which we described what we are learning from Southern African congregations on a missional journey (Hendriks 2009, Marais 2010, Mouton 2010, Nel 2010 and Niemandt 2010). I will illustrate how one should learn by listening from the Marys in congregations. Three spiritual practices are taking place on a congregational level, dwelling in the world, dwelling in the word and plunging. Together they represent a journey in discernment (Hendriks 2009:112-117, Niemandt 2010:10) based on a praxis methodology: it reaches out and get involved, it learns, reflects, evaluates, adapts and continues the doing-reflecting-doing spiral. This is a first step towards discerning and developing a new missional curriculum focussed on the *missio Dei*.

7.1 Dwelling in the World

⁸The newspapers reported that three of the once-famous Dutch seminaries are closing: Kampen, Antwerpen and Leiden. On the internet the following note was found under news: De Protestantse Theologische Universiteit (PThU) verhuist naar de Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam en de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (RUG). De huidige drie vestigingen, Utrecht, Kampen en Leiden, worden gesloten. Volgens het College van Bestuur van de PThU is dit de beste manier om het voortbestaan van de PThU ook op de lange termijn te garanderen. <http://www.pthu.nl/> downloaded 23 April 2010.

⁹The Southern African Partnership for Missional church: <http://www.comunitas.co.za/index.php/artikels2/26--wat-is-die-vennootskap-van-gestuurde-gemeentes> Downloaded 22 April 2010.

It is a new world. In this new world the Christendom church is dying. The *missio Dei* is focussed at this world so it makes sense to understand what is happening in the world because we are to be its light; we are to be salt in this world.

I will now illustrate how transformation took place on a congregational level in the Partnership for Missional Church (PMC or in Afrikaans : SAVGG). The logic is that we should follow the same process if we want to discern a new way forward in theological education, in curriculum development. There are no final answers in this article! We are only at the beginning of a process of transformation.

Congregations seeking a new way forward form a cluster after obtaining their respective church councils' permission (Hendriks 2009:109-119). They appoint leaders to guide them through the process. Laity play a key role, but not without their clergy's integral involvement. The cluster of congregations then departs on a missional discernment journey of approximately three years. This journey has four phases during which they seek to build five capacities:

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|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Discovery | building the capacity to listen. |
| 2 | Engagement | building the capacity to take risks. |
| 3 | Visioning | building the capacity to focus. |
| 4 | Practice and growth | building the capacity to learn and grow. |

The fifth capacity, that of sharing and mentoring, is built throughout the process.

Clusters meet nine times over the three-year period and these meetings have the following set of activities that form the agenda of each meeting:

- Dwelling in the Word
- Reflection on what was learned
- Learning from one another
- Function-orientated teaching
- Practising the teaching by dwelling in the world.

In most congregations this starts with congregational discovery and training members to listen. Developing listening leaders and listening teams (Keifert 2006:76-79; Marais & Taylor Ellison nd) is done by teaching basic principles of applied ethnography. The very elementary research that members do is revealing the congregation and the world in ways not known before. The cluster events gradually prepare and lead the way for crossing boundaries towards the wider world. At the seminary we train students and ministers in congregational studies which involve them in doing different analyses like a cultural or identity analysis of a congregation (Hendriks 2004:105-143) as well as a contextual analysis which involve discovering the macro, meso and micro context of their community and society. This literally involves answering the question how globalism influences your society and faith community (Hendriks 2004:69-103). Every member lives and works somewhere in the world and is taught or sensitized to listen, deliberately and spontaneously, to what is happening in the world. Everyday encounters can become missional events if coupled with dwelling in the Word.

7.2 Dwelling in the Word

Throughout the journey “dwelling in the Word” plays a key role. In all the SAPMC meetings Luke 10:1-12 was repeatedly read, reflected upon and discussed. It becomes a well-trodden path that challenges one to “step out” in faith on a journey across new frontiers, being guided by scriptural / spiritual principles. Nel summarized it well (2010:2):

The methodology of *Dwelling in the Word* consists of reading a chosen text aloud in a group. After the initial reading of the text, time is given for silent reflection on the meaning thereof. Every group member is then instructed to find a "reasonably friendly-looking stranger" with whom to share what has been "heard" in the personal reflection on the text. After sharing in pairs, members report to the group what they have heard from their respective partners. The group is then invited to discover the meaning of the text for their specific context by asking: "What is God up to here?" and "What is the Word of God for us in this place and time (cf. Keifert 2009:21)?" These two questions reflect the specific theological aim of *Dwelling in the Word* as to invite the participants thereof into the world of the text, and in so doing to join in the mission of God (the *missio Dei*) to the world (Keifert 2006:36-37). As such, it is part of the SAPMC journey to discern to whom God is specifically sending the participants as individuals and as a faith community. In the SAPMC, the expressed aim of the process of corporate spiritual discernment through *Dwelling in the Word* is to discover the preferred and promised future of God for a specific faith community (cf. Keifert 2006:64).

I am now following the central argument of Nel (2010) to explain this spiritual exercise that is so profoundly reshaping lives and congregations. Keifert called it the most significant innovation for building the missional capacities of a local church (2006:69). *Dwelling in the Word* stimulates the ability of congregants to imagine their everyday life within the narrative of Scripture. If groups start doing it together, it shapes a communal spiritual discernment capacity. Mouton added to this (2010:2):

This communal missional imagination empowers congregations to develop a missional understanding of the Scriptures, which will gradually change and re-shape the culture in the congregation. Those currently outside the congregational community will become more and more important. Soon congregations will ask: But to whom is Jesus sending us? Which part of the harvest was prepared in advance by the Father and the Spirit to whom Jesus is sending us, his body, now?

We are reminded of what Newbigin said: "the only effective hermeneutic of the gospel is the life of the congregation which believes it" (1989:234). Newbigin argues that a text like Luke 10:1-12 is acting like a hermeneutical lens which shapes the way you look at and experience the world (1989:97-99). The word indwells the reader; he/she is beginning to understand the world through the text. It awakens the imagination through the presence of the Holy Spirit and opens new plausibility structures of how to act and what to do. If this is done in a group, it activates communal spiritual discernment. God's *missio* gets underway in ways that were usually completely unpredictable. The interesting thing is that it usually comes from the fringes, from where it was not expected. Walls remarked that history shows this is a typical thing in missionary boundary crossing events (Walls 2002:67). The SAPMC own research shows to which extend dwelling in the word lead to spontaneous missional behaviour (Nel, 2010:7-10; Niemandt 2010 & Marais & Taylor-Ellison nd).

Nel latches on to Keifert (2009:15) when he very aptly explains the difference between this movement and what typically happens in a seminary. The old notion was that theology is done in the academia and then applied in congregations. Exegesis is done according to a set of exegetical rules which mostly negate a missional reading of the text. It often focuses backwards or inwards but seldom outwards in dialogue with the world. Nel says (2010:6) that academic exegesis is often an exercise in boundary marking instead of a boundary crossing one. He classifies dwelling in the word as a form of reader-response criticism practiced by ordinary, average readers, not academically trained exegetical specialists. My understanding

of theology is that it takes place when God intervenes... check Mary's example, it's a womb thing that unleashes or give birth to Christ walking out ahead of us. Dwelling in the word puts one "on track" ... the *missio Dei* track.

7.3 Plunging

"Plunging refers to the capacity to cross the congregation's cultural boundaries, which includes conceptual and geographical boundaries." (Mouton 2010:2). In this section I am drawing on Mouton's paper in which he sees plunging as a South African innovation of the methodology of the Church Innovations (<http://www.churchinnovations.org/> downloaded 22 April 2010). During the nine cluster meetings, described above (7.1), the phases and capacities develop the plunging skill as a concrete skill of reaching out to the world to discover where the *missio Dei* wants to take us. This is when and where people really experience "mission" or being sent. One can say that it is an antidote to the deadly virus of institutionalization when a congregation starts taking care of itself. Mouton (2010:3-4) answers the "Why plunge?" question in the following way:

1. It reconnects the congregation with its context and with God's actions and as such it is refreshed and energised. The cross-cultural movement always does this (Walls 2002).
2. The teachability of a congregation immediately expands. In Luke the "no purse, no bag, no sandals" advice addresses the power issue. Being a servant and eating "whatever they provide" say something about the way this is done.
3. The invisible walls of our own culture and setup soon become clear. The world of "the other", the stranger, the widow and orphan usually are a different and unknown world and hospitality acquires a new meaning.
4. New community formation takes place.
5. The new community forms something like a bridge community that guides the ministry forward and act as guide for all concerned in the process of discernment of where to go with the "new creation." As such it illustrates the praxis methodology of being a missional church and doing theology. It allows itself to be disciplined by the Triune God, realizing that life is a journey and roadmaps don't exist. It's like the manna in the wilderness. There is enough for each day.

8 CONCLUDING

Theologically speaking we need something of the hermeneutic outlined above which is akin to the training Mary received. It is about following Jesus in the world. It should happen as a response to God's Word, to God's gospel, to God's call. Responsive training is discernment in progress on the discipleship journey. The congregation is the habitat of doing theology of this journey, because theology is about the mission of God (Bosch 1991: 519). Theology is sustained by the manna of every day, received while on the journey. Theologians are, in the first place, the people to whom God has spoken, who believes that nothing is impossible with God, who answers to this call by saying (Luke 1:36):

I am the Lord's servant. ...May it be to me as you have said.

We have a new world. Globalization is a reality penetrating even to the most remote villages of Africa. We are discovering how to be a missional church in this new world and how important congregations are as the places where primal theology is done. Seminaries should therefore reconsider their very being and functioning.

We do understand that proselytizing is not what Act 15 decided on. We do realize that what happened after Acts 15 is what today can be called "uploading". The Wikipedia principle is

simply new language for a very basic assumption of Christian faith. The body of Christ is a missional body and each and all members are gifted to take part in the *missio Dei* (1 Cor 12, Rom 12).

History shows that churches die when they neglect this and grow when they are obedient and reaches out to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

So where does this leave us with seminaries and curricula?

We need to understand that the traditional seminary and traditional way of doing theology are about 500 years old, a product of Christendom (Tickle 2008). We are in the liminal sphere in which a new epoch is taking shape. More than ever seminaries now need congregations where God has moved the waters and healing takes place, to guide them. Discernment is living from manna on a journey. If both congregations and seminaries can travel without bags and purses and sandals and provide what food there is on their tables, the journey will continue and the road will unfold. May peace come to this house as it rediscovers the *missio Dei*.

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