

ties of theology are again accepted as members of universities. For example, Bucharest University includes the Orthodox Faculty, the Baptist Faculty and the Roman Catholic Faculty, with different departments.

However now, when the Romanians are trying to follow and adopt all the western traditions to become citizens of the European Union, many voices claim that we should not return to the traditional cooperation. They strongly recommend the pattern of some European countries, where religious education is not a part of the state system of education.

Personally, I think each country should keep the traditions that have proven to be successful over the centuries. The European Union is seeking the unity through diversity and does not impose infallible patterns. Religious education is a part of Romanian history and tradition and it is very important during this difficult period of transition. The educational system is democratic, and the denominations that are legally registered in Romania should have access to public education.

Classes of religion should be supported by the state because they are important for the formation of the future citizens, and not only from the spiritual, cultural or moral perspective. For example, recently the Romanian Orthodox church developed, in cooperation with USAID, a program aimed at the prevention of domestic violence and the transmission of HIV.

The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church

adopted the project. During the religious classes, young Romanians are educated from the Christian point of view, on how to fight against the spread of the virus, and how to relate to people living with HIV.

Religious education, organised in a democratic and transparent way, could also develop a better understanding of religious and inter-religious relationships. Society could benefit from this education, overcoming superstitions, prejudices and dangerous conflicts.

I do think that Europe should accept Romania as a member, together with its old traditions, which could be found among other member states. The religious education that survived here could be an example of a good relationship between Church and state, an expression of ecumenism and interfaith mutual respect.

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NAGYPÁL Szabolcs

The Edification of Community: Education and Ecumenical Renewal

*"Theological education is our nerve centre,
and our willingness to shoulder it is an indication
of our growing maturity in Jesus Christ."*

(Prince THOMPSON)

The phenomena of culture and religion are mutually accountable to each other, and together they constitute the context where theology and education are to be conducted. The ecumenical movement is especially responsible for the Christian education for unity. Through its institutions and methodologies, it serves the visible unity of the Church, for her renewal in dialogue and community.

CULTURE AND RELIGION

According to Paul TILLICH, "Religion is the substance of culture, and culture is the form of religion." In TILLICH's thinking, the three forms of culture are the autonomous, the heteronomous and the theonomous.

Culture shapes the human voice that answers to the voice of God in faith. In these ways we have to provide an authentic witness within each culture, taking into account the one Gospel and its diverse expressions.

In the theology of cultures, five main models were developed by H. Richard NIEBUHR to describe the relationship between *Jesus Christ and culture*: Christ against culture, the Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Jesus Christ the transformer of culture.

Historical examples of the various Gospel and culture relationships include firstly *indigenisation* (taking root in the soil), as well as *contextualisation* (the interpenetration of subject and object).

Other historical examples also include *acculturation* and *adaptation* (applying Christian practices to local cultures) and *inculturation* (the prophetic and liberative insertion of new values into one's heritage and worldview).

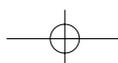
In the understanding of contextual theology, the divine form of contextualisation is *incarnation*. According to this, there are already theological meanings embedded in the cultures, showing the depth and breadth of the mystery of God.

The main rule for religious and cultural encounters remains, in accordance with Acts 15,28, to impose no further burden than the essential things. The Gospel illumines and transforms a culture, and cultures illumine and incarnate the Gospel.

As a result, every human culture is de-stigmatised, renewed and revitalised by the Gospel, and every human culture is at the same time deabsolutised, relativised and brought into dialogue by the Good News.

Genuine Gospel values are present in all cultures in the forms of life, faith, peace, humility, solidarity, justice, freedom, compassion, dialogue, reciprocity, joy, wisdom and holistic relations with creation.

When rediscovering the catholicity of the Christian Church in each cultural context, the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ serves as the standard for our wise discernment.



THEOLOGY OF UNITY

"Evangelism is the test of true ecumenism," states Philip POTTER. Within culture and within religion, theology (or God-talk) in the ecumenical movement is that committed human activity by which the confessing and believing Christian community mutually accounts for the faith of the Church.

Theology deals most of all with the transmission of the faith, with the sharing of the experience of belief, and with the edification of the community. It expresses faith in a manner, which preserves the shared experience of God by the witnesses of all times.

The formative factors of theology are the experience of God's Self-exposure, the Scripture, the Tradition, culture and reason. As a basic rule, the freedom of theological schools within the same orthodoxy has to be emphasized.

A theology of unity in diversity requires self-emptying (*kenosis*), total humility and intellectual honesty, with a constant awareness that no-one can comprehend in its entirety or circumscribe the fullness of the mystery of God.

In accordance with this mystery, theology has mystical, experiential and apophatic dimensions, as well as intellectual, rational and doctrinal ones. At the end of the day, however, it is the Spirit of Truth Who guides us into all Truth (John 16,13).

Genuine ecumenical theology, therefore, is also a permanent crucifixion for the reason and for the intellect, in the sense that it is at the same time intellectual, as well as prayerful and doxological.

We must try to say together what can be said to express consensus, agreement or convergence. The Church exists for the life of the world; therefore her unity is as absolute as her diversity, in the image of the Holy Trinity.

In accordance with this theology of unity, theological education should concentrate on the training of native (indigenous) leaders, on the requirements of context and culture, on liberation and cross-cultural discussion, and on curriculum development in the ecclesial institutes of higher learning as well.

Its main institutional means, the World Council of Churches (WCC) Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE, 1996) was previously called the Theological Education Fund (TEF, from 1958) and the Programme on Theological Education (PTE, from 1977).

The aim of these three endeavours has been to assist the churches as a catalyst for the reform and renewal of the entire theological education for genuine authenticity, imaginative creativity and overarching quality.

We constantly have to ask ourselves during the whole process of theological education for unity: what will best serve the transmission of the faith in the diversity of the one-Church-to-be in the ages to come?

EDUCATION FOR ECUMENISM

Ecumenical education is common endeavour of culture and religion (theology). The line of education is generally considered the oldest of the four main branches within the ecumenical movement, coming before Mission and Evangelism, Faith and Order, and Life and Work.

The Office of Education within the World Council of Churches (WCC) used to be called the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) between 1947 and 1971, and World Sunday School Association (WSSA) between 1907 and 1947.

Ecumenical learning has two parallel aims. First, it works towards the visible unity of the Church in order to let the churches be more truly the Church; and second, it works for the renewal of the human community in order to live as a liberating and reconciling community in dialogue, thus creating a dwelling place for all.

Ecumenical education is democratic; it respects the ministry by all God's people; it is based on a theology by the people, and it employs a shared and apostolic type of leadership. This type of education concludes in the cross-fertilisation of ideas and strengthened linkages among all the participants.

Ecumenical formation is also comprehensive; it emphasises consensus, agreements, convergences and our common witness. It concentrates on learning by experience, and by direct encounter and confrontation with situations in a world horizon.

As a parcel of this, adult education is an organised learning outside the school system, a collective diffusion of knowledge involving worldview, vision, values, understanding, attitudes, practices, strategies, skills and tools.

Basically, all of life is a learning experience from the cradle to the grave. Through adult education, the formal, informal and non-formal ways of education are integrated into a lifelong learning process.

Ecumenical *catechesis* is primarily an oral teaching about the faith, doctrine, liturgy and life of the Church, while *catechism* is a written religious instruction. Both of their main aims are to contribute to the growth of the unity and communion of the Christian Church.

Catechesis creates and fosters a true desire for unity, and it facilitates involvement in the ecumenical movement, preparing the way for dialogue and for fruitful and fraternal relations with each other. After all, we should not educate someone just to educate an individual—but rather in order to educate a nation, the Church, and humanity as a whole.

In short, education for ecumenism is fostering an understanding of, a commitment to and an informed participation in the whole ecumenical process. Through this, we are called to become vulnerable to the suffering of the others, to become compassionate and empathic, by becoming neighbours to (and from) strangers.

Education for ecumenism and dialogue is a total process that has ecclesiological, missionary as well as social-ethical elements. It aims to transcend barriers in an action-oriented way, interculturally learning together in community, in order to bring about an experience of the riches of creation in nature, history and culture.

ECUMENICAL INSTITUTES

In the worldwide process of education for ecumenism and dialogue, a crucial part is played by the various interdenominational and confessional ecumenical institutes, which express their ecumenicity through their organisation and their thematic foci.

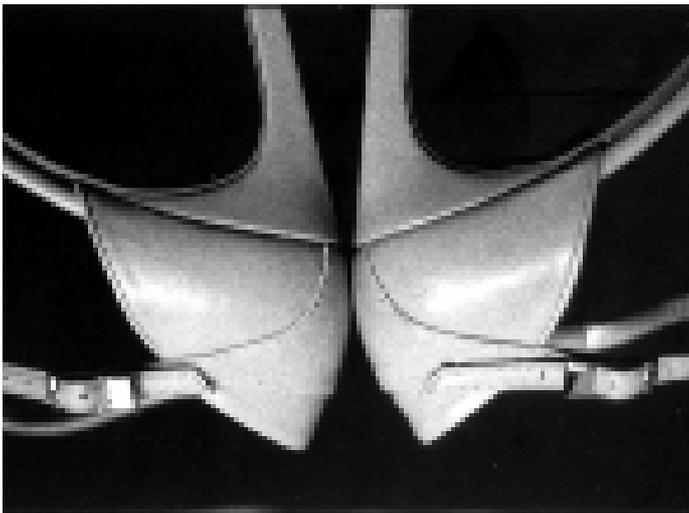
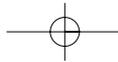
As for ecumenical institutes, important examples are the Franciscan *Centro Pro Unione* (Rome, 1948); the *Centre Saint-Irénée* (Lyons, 1955); and the *Chambésy* Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (1966).

The Benedictine monastery of *Chèvetogne* (1925, founded by Dom Lambert BEAUDUIN OSB) publishes *Irénikon* (1926), which is the very first Roman Catholic ecumenical review in the world.

The first director of the *Bossey* Ecumenical Institute (1946) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) near Genève was Hendrik KRAEMER. The Bossey Institute still functions as a laboratory for ecumenical life.

The Johann-Adam MÖHLER Institute for Ecumenics (and Controversial Theology) (Paderborn, 1957, founded by Archbishop LORENZ JAEGER) aims to acknowledge our commonalities, in the light of which one can better understand and evaluate our differences.

The *Pro Oriente* Institute (Wien, 1964, founded by



Cardinal Franz KÖNIG) worked out the famous *Wiener Christologische Formel* (Wien Agreement on Christology) in 1988 with the Oriental Orthodox churches.

The Benedictine Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research (Colleville, 1967, founded by Kilian McDONNELL OSB) aims to dispel religious ignorance and to promote better understanding and harmony.

The *Tantur* Ecumenical Institute (Jerusalem, 1972) aims at a community life of prayer, study and dialogue. Considered by many as an oasis of sane discourse, TEL deals especially with ways of creative non-violence.

The Benedictine *Békés Gellért* Ecumenical Institute (BGÖI, Pannonhalma, Hungary, 2001) was founded by Bishop and Archabbot VÁRSZEGI Asztrik OSB. Through its ecumenical research and publications, it serves as one of the main catalysts for ecumenical rapprochement in Central Europe.

The Fellowship of *Study Centres* (1980) brings together the dialogue centres or institutes for religion and culture. Similarly, the *Societas Ecumenica* (1978) is the European Society for Ecumenical Research.

Finally, *Oikosnet* (1972) is a global ecumenical network of laity centres, academies and movements for social concern working for just, participatory, sustainable and inclusive communities, through dialogue on the world's agenda and weaving communities of hope.

ECUMENICAL PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGMS

It is worth examining two important pedagogical paradigms which have gained momentum in the history of the ecumenical movement. The two are in many ways complementary to each other.

Joseph Houldsworth OLDHAM (1874–1969) was the pioneer of the imaginative ecumenical *study method*. The Oxford conference (1957) of the Life and Work (L&W) movement, organised by him, was the first ecumenical study conference on social issues.

According to OLDHAM, the Church must be not only a community of worship and love, but also a community of thought: “In the fulfilment of her task, the Church must call to her aid the best minds that she can command.”

As ‘best minds’ he means spiritual insights, understanding and abilities for dialogue, keeping in mind that the realities of the spiritual world may be hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed precisely to the children. Jesus Christ

as well emphasises in Mark 9,33–37 the importance of the adult's transformation to childhood.

The Brazilian Paulo Reglus Neves FREIRE (1921–1997) worked out the *pedagogy of the oppressed*, with its focus on the preferential option for the poor. This pedagogy aims to enable the marginalised to become subjects of their own history and to participate actively in decision-making.

The key word of Paulo FREIRE's concept is *conscientisation* (awareness-raising). According to this idea, both teachers and pupils simultaneously become knowing subjects in a two-way process, brought together by the object they know.

FREIRE's theory signifies a radical shift from teaching about to learning together with. Here the learners are fully involved themselves in selecting the subject; then they pose, discuss and tackle the problem in a dialogue situation.

This action-and-reflection model requires serious wisdom and refined discernment. This pedagogy can never be neutral, but comes from a certain context and aims for a commitment towards the transformation of the society and the Church.

RENEWAL AND DIALOGUE

Genuine *communication* happens when information is imparted, ideas and thoughts are exchanged, cultures are shared, and people and places are brought into close relationship, cooperation and dialogue.

The Christian principles of communication (being bound together as one) are participation, liberation and prophesy, which together create community and communion and support and develop culture.

It is certain that each teaching requires *reception*, the mutual critical testing and apt appropriation, the gradual and mutual acceptance of the results of ecumenical dialogues by individuals and the community.

While reception is a response to rapid change, it is also a recovery and a re-endorsement of the basic and ancient truths of the valid Church Tradition and the personal and communitarian experiences.

Therefore, the aim of education for ecumenism and dialogue is *renewal* from the roots (*aggiornamento* or bringing up-to-date). Before the others, we must renew ourselves, so that we may be found increasingly faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As an eternal model, the very nature of the Triune God is communication and the *dialogue* among the three Persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the holy *perichoresis* (mutual interpenetration) of love.

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- NAGYPÁL Szabolcs (1974) is a graduate in ecumenical theology, law and literature. He is a theologian in the Benedictine *Békés Gellért Ecumenical Institute* (BGÖI) in Pannonhalma, and teaches philosophy in ELTE University in Budapest. He was chairperson of KÖD (Magyar SCM) and WSCF CESR; a member of the ERC and ExCo. He co-edited the books: *A Pentatonic Landscape: Central Europe, Ecology, Ecumenism* (2002); *The River Book: Identity, Culture, Responsibility* (2005); *medi(t)ations, (re)conciliations. Conflict Resolution and European Integration* (2004); and *Subtle as Serpents, Gentle as Doves. Equality and Independence* (2005). He is the editor-in-chief of *Student World* (2005–) and was editor-in-chief of *Mozaiik* (2001–2004).

