

The Missiological Foundations for Theological Education

According to Martin Kahler, "mission is the mother of theology", which implies a focus on mission for the whole task of theological education in the church. From this we will seek to develop some basic principles in order to guide the educational task of the church:

1. The *origin of mission: the triune God (missio Dei)*.

Throughout biblical revelation it becomes clear that God is the principal actor of events. "In the beginning *God* created..." It is *God* who creates, judges, acts, chooses and reveals himself. He is active not only in creation, but also in his judgments, in the liberation of his people from Egypt, in his prophets' exhortations, and in the promise of the coming restoration. He is the only and true God and wills that his glory be known in the heavens (Ps 19) and to the ends of the earth (Is 11.9).

Therefore, "Mission" prior to any human implication which speaks of the task of the church, is a *divine* task. This means that mission belongs to God. It is he who conducts the church to fulfill her call.

2. The *instrument of mission: the church (missio ecclesiae)*.

If God is the principal actor of mission, he is not the only one. Mission as *the church's task* is derived from the *God's mission*. The election of the God's people, prior to any implication of *exclusive* favoritism, had a purpose of *inclusive service with universal ends*. Election is not for separation, but participation and service, a perspective that protects us from an ascetic posture that seeks isolation from this world in favor of some "celestial" plane.

No emphasis on God's mission does not inhibit the activity of his people, but rather, empowers it. To be proactive and specific in establishment pedagogical foundations, in the clarification of educational objectives, in the definition of courses, in curriculum elaboration, and in the planning of an academic teaching career policy are all derived from God's call for the mission of the church.

3. The *articulation of mission: theology (missio theologiae)*

God shares his task with his people and invites them to participate in it. As the God's people, we receive the promise that he is always with us in the fulfillment of his mission. God's mission *can never be considered synonymous* with the church's mission, Neither can the church consider her missionary call without seeking to discern theologically God's mission within her historical context.

4. The *purpose of mission: restoration (missio restaurare)*.

Among the various terms that describe the purpose of mission, one of the most wide-reaching is restoration. It is a *liberating mission* that looks toward the restoration of the

whole creation. There will be a new Heaven and a new Earth, even through suffering, tribulation and judgment. Mission includes the announcement of Good News, the struggle for justice and the restoration of human dignity, all of which God wills for his creation.

5. **The range of mission: universal (*missio creationi*).**

Scripture describes the acts of God in history, beginning with the account of creation and ending with the restoration of the same. Human beings are not only their neighbor's keepers, but stewards of all creation. For example, God's laws outline the religious, social and ecological dimensions of faith and obedience of his people, providing instruments for the well-being of the whole of creation in all of its multiple dimensions of life. Also, scriptural psalms and hymns include the praises not only of God's people, but also of nature itself.

6. **The place of mission: history (*missio historiae*).**

From the very beginning of biblical testimony, we observe that God acts *within and through* the concrete events of human lives. He manifests himself not in some contemplative and "celestial" plane, but within *historical events*. Even the apocalyptic literature which emphasizes a contrast between God's activity and this world, teaches that the future intervention and restoration of God will be an eruption within *this* history and *this* world. Therefore, mission is played out in common human history, not exclusively in or through the church.

7. **The ultimate goal of mission: the glory of God (*missio Deum*).**

The ultimate goal and end of the church's mission, as well as that of all human beings, is the glory of God, not missionary or educational activity in and of themselves. For this reason, the church needs to prioritize worship because only God is ultimate. The mission of the church in all her areas, including theological education, begins and ends with worship rendered to the glory of God. It begins there because only genuine and profound worship can adequately motivate the church to assume her missionary and educational vocation. It ends there because the ultimate goal and chief end of all humanity is to glorify God forever. And thus, the fundamental importance of theological education is to contribute to glorifying God.

Implications:

1. Concerning the concept of *missio Dei*:
 - a. The theological grounding of the church's mission is especially important because of the *dependence* that the church has on God, and serves to promote a means to evaluate *our* efforts, made always in light of God's mission in the world.
 - b. Thinking pedagogically, this concept requires educational formation in biblical and theological areas.

2. Concerning the concept of *missio ecclesiae*:

- a. The educational task belongs to the whole church in all its dimensions and levels. Even her structural organization should clearly reflect this responsibility given to the *church*.
- b. One of the marks of the church is *catholicity*. A *ecumenical* commitment is essential to the success of the church's mission and without this commitment, her mission is compromised.
- c. The missional task, as the responsibility of the whole church, implies that theological education involves all the people of God in their various vocations in the world. It implies the church's recognition of various ministries: missionary, diaconal and pastoral.
- d. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio ecclesiae* requires adequate educational formation in pastoral and missiological areas.

3. Concerning the concept of *missio theologiae*:

- a. The church's projects and programs are always provisional, in the face of constant theological exploration and criticism, never fully definitive and always "open" to redefinition.

The pedagogical process of theological education ought to favor learning by discovery and not by dogmatic teaching.

- b. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio theologiae* requires a critical posture in teaching disciplines in all areas, as well as requiring a thorough knowledge of the social processes involved in hermeneutics and the sociology of knowledge.

4. Concerning the concept of *missio restaurare*:

- a. Theological education must be consistent with a liberating and bold understanding of the world and society in which it lives. Thus, "mission means to serve, to heal, to reconcile a divided and wounded humanity." (Bosch 2002: 589), and this definition has countless implications for the course of theology in its various areas.

- b. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio restaurare* requires formation in the area of

the human sciences.

5. Concerning the concept of *missio creationi*:

- a. The church has a mission of stewardship over the whole creation. Thus, environmental problems become a part of the church's missional concern.

- b. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio creationi* requires an educational formation that embraces environmental and political areas and social responsibility.

6. Concerning the concept of *missio historiae*:

a. It is necessary to discern *where* and *how* God manifests his rule in history, in the proclamation of the gospel, and in the struggle for justice. The rule of God should not be identified with historical process, although we can and should attempt to detect signs of that in history.

b. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio historiae* requires educational formation in the areas of history and political geography.

7. Concerning the concept of *missio Deum*:

a. Liturgy, education and evangelization all form a part of the church's mission and witness. However, they should never be viewed as ultimate ends, but means to reach the ultimate goal of glorifying God.

b. Thinking pedagogically, the concept of *missio Deum* requires devotional formation, the study of liturgy and music as well as all the areas that contribute to personal and community worship.