

## Theological Education in the Brazilian Context

CARLOS EDUARDO CALVANI\*

### *The Background of Theological Education in Brazil*

To speak of theological education in the Brazilian context, it is necessary to recall a bit of the history of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil (IEAB) and its search for autonomy and contextualization. Compared with other provinces in the Anglican Communion, the IEAB is relatively young: it became independent in 1965, only forty-three years ago. Nonetheless, Anglican history in Brazil goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century and the colonial chaplaincies.

Initially these chaplaincies sought to isolate themselves from the local culture; they celebrated the liturgy only in English and did not show any initiative toward enculturation. Only in 1890 did the Anglican witness begin to make itself heard in the local language. This happened through the work of two US missionaries from Virginia Theological Seminary, James Morris and Lucien Lee Kinsolving, later the first Anglican bishop for Brazil. They both tried to learn Portuguese and soon established missions that would later become parishes. But the two missionaries alone could not meet the needs of the Brazilian people; the growing church needed to train persons with vocations to serve in a pastoral capacity. In 1893 the first two Brazilian deacons were ordained, but they had no theological training. At the first convocation in which he participated, one of them, Vicente Brande, requested that the church strive to offer theological training for the laity and for candidates for ordained ministry. That convocation charged the missionary William Cabel Brown with this task.

Over the next two years, a committee studied the feasibility of founding a seminary, and William Brown was made supervisor of

---

\* Carlos Eduardo Calvani, Doctor in Theology and Sciences of Religions, is Coordinator of the Centro de Estudos Anglicanos (CEA) of the Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil. This article was translated by William Steinmetz.

theological education. Nearby missionaries directly tutored interested students. At the convocation of 1900, noting the surge in the number of Brazilians with vocations, Bishop Kinsolving declared that it was time to make the seminary a reality. So on June 15, 1903, the first Episcopal seminary in Brazil officially opened in Rio Grande with eight students—a date the IEAB officially marks as Theological Education Day. The seminary initially operated in a residence. Students were divided into two groups, one of which undertook preparatory work, while the other group studied for the ministry. The seminary geared its program to ministry to the Brazilian public. In addition to the emphasis on Brazilian history and Portuguese language, there was a requirement that students involve themselves in missionary activities in both rural and urban areas, in prisons, and in other missionary situations.

But in 1909, fearful that the Brazilian church would not be able to support the clergy financially, Bishop Kinsolving decided to close the seminary, setting a precedent that has been followed frequently. (In a country with an unstable economy and a church that was not yet independent or self-supporting, the first target of cost containment was always theological education.) In subsequent years, Bishop Kinsolving called on the pioneer missionary James Watson Morris to come back to Brazil to coordinate theological education. Morris accepted, but with the condition that the seminary would never again close its doors. And so in 1920 the seminary was reopened, this time in the city of Porto Alegre. But Morris's condition was not met: in 1933 the seminary again suspended its activities for lack of candidates, only to reopen two years later.

In the 1950s the church invested heavily in theological education, and the seminary became a College of Theology, with a faculty that included professors from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul and the Pontifical Catholic University of Porto Alegre. The seminary regularly invited theologians from Europe and the United States to share their research. It sought to maintain a standard of excellence that included academic rigor, devotional life, and commitment to mission and contextualization. As a curricular requirement, students had to serve as trainees at parishes on weekends and take on certain missionary activities. In 1963, as part of its missionary strategy, the church transferred the seminary from Porto Alegre (in the south of Brazil) to the more central region of São Paulo. There, the seminary maintained

the same quality it had attained in Porto Alegre and expanded its influence in ecumenical circles.

In the early 1960s, the Episcopal Anglican Seminary of Brazil watched with interest the nascent ecumenical, social, and political debates of liberation theology and received criticism from more conservative groups accusing the institution of being a center for the dissemination of communism. The seminary continued to host contemporary theologians concerned with the contextualization of the gospel, such as Harvey Cox, Cornelius Rijk, José Comblin, and Richard Shaull. In 1964 the country suffered a military coup, which installed a dictatorship that would last twenty-three years. Ultraconservative groups began a campaign against dissenters that affected theological education not only in the IEAB but in other denominations as well. As the military regime progressively adopted hard-line tactics, and seminaries of other Protestant denominations closed, many students enrolled in the IEAB's seminary because they saw it as a place of resistance and of theological education committed to the Brazilian context. But this situation brought tension to the church. The IEAB was still small and had only recently begun its independence; it was seeking to establish its identity as a suitable church for Brazilians. At the same time, the seminary was a place for vanguard thinking, experimentation, and daring, open analysis and discussion of the most recent theological ideas. Displeased groups preferred to keep the seminary under control, and were vigilant to avoid what they considered to be abuse and innovation.

The independence of the Brazilian church brought not only maturity but also financial difficulty. By the end of the 1960s, the dioceses were already complaining of a lack of financial resources needed to send seminary students to São Paulo. A plan for decentralizing theological education led to the creation of local diocesan centers for theological education—a strategy that put the national seminary in a deep crisis. In the early 1970s more Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and students other than Anglicans were enrolled in the seminary. Tuition payments were not sufficient to maintain the former level of excellence. In 1972, the seminary could not avoid closing once again. It rented its properties out to schools, banks, professionals, and clinics. The national seminary did not reopen until years later, in 1984, again in Porto Alegre, with a much reduced budget that it shared with the diocesan theological education programs. This model is still in place today.

Despite its troubled history, everyone recognizes that the seminary had and still has a fundamental role in the life of the IEAB. Most of the Anglican leadership and the majority of the current bishops in Brazil received their theological training at the Brazilian seminary. It is because of its leaders' seminary training that the IEAB enjoys national and international recognition as a small church with a marked presence in Brazilian religious activity, in ecumenism, and in contextual pastoral initiatives.

Furthermore, Brazilians now realize the huge effect of closing the seminary for many years (1909–1920 and particularly 1972–1984). Today, the IEAB has an extensive contingent of clergy over sixty years of age and a younger generation below forty, separated by a reduced number of clergy from forty-five to sixty, precisely the generation that did not receive training at the seminary in the 1970s and early 1980s. There are also many clergy in this age range whose training and ordination were delayed until after they were forty-five and had already established their professional lives.

Brazilians also recognize that the national seminary headed the theological discussions that prompted the church to reconsider its Anglo-Catholic liturgical heritage in the 1950s, to rethink its identity as at once Anglican and Brazilian, to take up the social challenges of the 1960s and early 1970s, and to engage in discussion of enculturation and women's ordination at the end of the 1980s.

#### *The Current Model of Theological Education in Brazil*

Since the IEAB did not support itself from the outset, it has faced much financial difficulty since its emancipation in the 1960s. The dioceses did not have the wherewithal to support young seminarians (some married) in a distant region. Hence, when theological education began to decentralize in the mid-1970s, each diocese assumed responsibility for its own training, using proceeds from the lease of the property of the former seminary (administered by the church's National Board of Theological Education, or JUNET). Even so, the dioceses were also unable to meet the demand for theological education, and the seminary was reopened in Porto Alegre. But this did not resolve the situation. The dioceses did not give up the monies received from JUNET; the money the seminary received was not enough to support it; and the dioceses were sending a reduced number of students to the national seminary.

In the 1990s, the church realized that it was necessary to create an institution on the provincial level that would coordinate the efforts between the seminary and the dioceses. In 1997, the General Synod, in consultation with the House of Bishops, created the Center for Anglican Studies (CEA) to help fulfill the dioceses' needs. The center was also to lend support to two seminaries (one in the south and the other in the north), and to encourage teacher training, publish updated theological literature, and organize inter-diocesan events for theological training and continuing education.

Currently, the IEAB has nine dioceses and one missionary district. Each diocese has its own local center for theological training for clergy and laypersons. The two national seminaries are still open, but few dioceses send students to these seminaries to complete the lengthy and more systematic study program. In addition to a four-year undergraduate program, the seminary in Porto Alegre offers shorter courses (from one to six months) for immersion in Anglicanism; again, few dioceses send ordination candidates to these courses. Most of the theological training is offered by the dioceses themselves, often using seminaries run by the Roman Catholic, Protestant, or free churches. It falls to the Center for Anglican Studies to fill the gaps in theological training and, at the same time, maintain a certain cohesiveness among the dioceses.<sup>1</sup>

Each year, the CEA creates its agenda after consulting the bishops, diocesan commissions on ministry, and coordinators of the centers for theological education to find out the needs of the dioceses. Each diocese reserves three to five days each year to meet with the CEA's team of consultants. During this period, local clergy, candidates for ordination, and students examine a specific topic chosen for the occasion, which have included evangelization, mission, pastoral counseling, the history of the church and of Anglicanism, themes in Anglican theology, liturgy, administration, and canons. In addition, the CEA organizes three annual inter-diocesan meetings to bring together clergy and lay representatives to examine topics of interest in the region. These "ministerial sharing sessions" promote communion and an exchange of ideas and experiences among recently ordained and more experienced clergy from different dioceses. Once a year, the

---

<sup>1</sup> To date, the CEA has had two coordinators: Francisco de Assis da Silva (1997–2001), currently the General Secretary of the IEAB, and Carlos Calvani (since 2001).

CEA organizes a national meeting with representatives from the clergy and laity from each diocese. This meeting looks at specific issues in Anglican theology and the mission of the Brazilian church. The topics over the past few years have been Anglican and Brazilian liturgy, Brazilian culture and liturgy, enculturated mission, and comprehensiveness.

Beyond these educational events, since 2002 the CEA has maintained a website with news, essays in Anglican theology, liturgical music, and an Anglican bibliography listing some nine hundred titles in Portuguese. In 2002, the CEA began to publish a national periodical, *Inclusividade*, in which theological topics are addressed by Brazilian theologians, preferably but not always Anglicans. The periodical (registered with the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture as a scientific publication) has subscribers from various churches, and is distributed to the clergy of the IEAB and to various seminaries of other denominations in Brazil and abroad. To date, fourteen issues have been published on a range of themes in Episcopal ministry, including sexuality, theological education, authority in the church, Anglican liturgy and sacraments, and missiology and ecclesiology, as well as the Bible, history, and theology. Issues have also focused on the fifty years of ministry of theologian Jaci Maraschin, and on twenty years of women's ordination in the IEAB. The upcoming issue will focus on the Anglican Communion today. The CEA tries to be attentive to important issues that people are talking about now in our church, not only on the national level, but also internationally.

Since 2002, the CEA has been responsible for the annual publication of a biblical commentary on the IEAB lectionary, for use in preaching and in Bible study. After initial electronic publication, in 2005 the CEA published the first book of commentary on the lectionary for Year B. A commentary for Year C followed in 2006, with the commentary for Year A to appear this year. The plan is to renew the team of commentators each year to write new commentary.

In 2004, the CEA promoted the First Academic Symposium on Anglican Theology, with financial support from the Commission for Theological Education for Latin America and the Caribbean and JUNET. The main theme was comprehensiveness or inclusiveness, with discussions of the Bible, liturgy, missionary and pastoral work, and ethics. The five days of intensive debate and reflection helped the IEAB to develop further its self-awareness as a church of Brazilians for Brazilians, as well as one influenced by Anglo-Saxon tradition.

CEA is now producing a series of four books on evangelization and mission, in simple language, for use as study guides by communities and for lay ministry training. The CEA has sought to interact with other provinces of the Anglican Communion through its exchange program which has, in recent years, brought John Kater of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Berkeley, California) and Juan Oliver of The General Theological Seminary (New York) to lecture and proctor short courses at the two seminaries and in a few dioceses.

In sum, the IEAB has invested in a model that values diocesan initiatives in theological education as well as initiatives in the two national seminaries, with an institution that coordinates these efforts. The goal is to pursue a common vocation: being a church in the Anglican tradition but with originality, enculturation, and relevance to the Brazilian context.

#### *Challenges for Theological Education in the Brazilian Context*

*Liberation Theology as a Criterion.* The theological education that Brazilian Anglicanism is developing cannot base itself in any context other than Latin America. This means reconciling the traditions received from Europe and the United States with Latin American theology. But what type of reconciliation would that be? Based on what criteria? Our principal criterion is relevance to our own context. Accordingly, for some time Brazilian Anglicanism has been using the concepts of liberation theology as criteria for reading the Bible and interpreting tradition.

Liberation theology evolved from the struggle for survival in Latin America; it was not the brainchild of important European or United States theological colleges. Faith-inspired resistance to oppression has led some people to find the source of their faith in similar processes narrated in the Holy Scriptures of Christianity: the Exodus, the prophets, and, of course, the life and work of Jesus. More importance has always been placed on correct practice (orthopraxy) than on correct belief (orthodoxy) and clear dogmatic definitions. Liberation theology has called the attention of Christians in the developed world to the misery and exclusion suffered by the majority of human beings worldwide, and has denounced the ideological presumptions of many first-world theologies, liberal as well as conservative or charismatic. Attuned to life itself—something that is not primarily doctrinal but practical—liberation theology is the most

ecumenical of all recent theologies. Roman Catholics and Protestants of different traditions have set aside their presumptions, put down their armor, and managed to come together to work toward a much more dignified ideal than the defense of one institution or another. For this very reason, liberation theology has caused discomfort for some at the Vatican and in Protestant ideological centers. Liberation theology has prompted other theological approaches to question their social relevance. It is not enough for theologies to be orthodox, for their internal arguments to be well thought-out, or for their dialogue with secular society to stand on firm ground. Theologies must be at the service of life, rather than dogmatic pride or institutional legitimization. Therefore, liberation theology emerged first as an initiative with ethical and pastoral concerns; only later did it express concerns labeled dogmatic or systematic.

Despite all this, people now say that liberation theology has come to an end or is in crisis. In fact, the initial zeal has relaxed a bit; Basic Ecclesial Communities have weakened; and ideas of social utopias—though they have not died out—are clearly lacking in vitality and energy, as if waiting for a prince's kiss. But full liberation has not yet taken place; on the contrary, economic oppression and social exclusion have spread in Latin America and elsewhere. The initial moment in liberation theology has passed; now it has matured and branched out into various possibilities for the work of new priests and theologians on our continent.

Like any vibrant movement, liberation theology has concerned itself with identifying the new challenges of the day and providing adequate theological and pastoral answers. Since the 1980s, a few academic theologians have recognized that oppression has many facets, of which the socioeconomic is but one. Hence, the concerns of liberation theology have expanded, especially as the concept of "the excluded" has replaced that of "the poor." The concept of exclusion covers cultural oppression and the oppression of women, Black people, those of indigenous or Aboriginal cultures, migrants, sexual minorities, and others. Yet this expansion of concepts has also caused an internal crisis. Some of those who defended the concept of exclusion said that the concept of "the poor" was reductionist; oppression can be more than economic. But certain older liberation theologians reacted to what they perceived as a bourgeois infiltration in liberation theology that took the focus away from the poor.



This tension allowed liberation theology to mature in at least two areas. On the one hand, theologians most concerned with the economic dimension began to dedicate more attention to exclusion and to produce important high quality works that are still little known at most evangelical seminaries. Now, the causes of poverty and the importance of thinking about global solutions to global problems are easier to see. This area deserves a great deal of attention in our context. It is an enormous challenge to all who are interested in economic issues and seeking out solidary alternatives capable of facing and exorcizing the despots that dominate the world economy. Much good has also come to those who insisted on the concept of exclusion, specifically because of the pastoral work that liberates the middle class and of the awareness that liberation must reach everyone—not only the oppressed, but also the oppressors and those who benefit from oppression.

*The Challenge of Living Religiously in Postmodernity.* In the middle of the twentieth century, Paul Tillich suggested that traditional Protestantism was fading away. He was referring to the churches that insisted on holding onto the models born of the Reformation. But Tillich ended the article by saying that while the “Protestant era” was coming to an end, the “Protestant principle” would continue to be strong.<sup>2</sup> One cannot deny that traditional Protestantism in Brazil is in crisis because it has never renewed itself. The saying “the church reformed and always to be reformed” is beautiful, but very dangerous for institutional leaders, because this view of the church raises suspicions about each and every excessive institutionalization, including that which has affected Brazilian Protestantism.

The Episcopal Anglican Church started in Brazil as a typically Protestant church. The Anglicanism Brazil has inherited is the result of modernity and its religious ramifications as embodied by the Reformation. Today, however, the IEAB tries to be sensitive to the signs of the times and to monitor the crisis of modernity and the advent of postmodernity. What people conventionally call postmodern is the realization that the great discourses of reference for explaining the world—Marxism, capitalism, psychoanalysis, Freudianism, Positivism, science,

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *A Era Protestante* (São Paulo: Ciências da Religião, 1994), 249.

technical reason, and even traditional Christian theology—are no longer capable of offering meaningful answers for the new times. In fact, contextualized theological education in Brazil must prepare Brazilians to think about the possibilities of the future and not to concentrate on the answers offered by theology and the church in the past.

Brazilians have no intention of starting a movement to return to Anglican traditions. Instead, the Brazilian church intends to make its legacy meaningful in its present context, with a view to its future. Today, all systems are falling into decay, and it is no use wasting energy to try to hold them in place or raise them up again; better to rummage for pieces that can help build small shelters. The church will not be able to face the challenges of postmodernity in Brazil by trying to reconstruct typically modern ecclesiastical spaces or by returning to a theology that used to be modern and has little to say to those in the church today. Rather, it must identify Brazil's situation clearly and seek out new theological answers for the new times. Translating old answers into new words is not sufficient.

*The Challenge of Building a New Concept of Truth and Orthodoxy.* Postmodernity questions all discourse that explains and announces absolute truths, along with the concept of truth itself. Currently, Anglicans in Brazil recognize that theology is a discourse produced in a community of faith by persons who have had marked experiences with the sacred and with life. The first confession of faith in the form of a creed that one finds in the Bible (Deut. 26:5–9) does not contain any dogmatic definitions. It simply relates the experience of liberation that Yahweh gave to a people. This is how theology was born, as a witness of faith and without any intention of becoming a scientific discourse (in the modern sense). But when Greek thought became the paradigm for theology, people started to think that that word “truth” meant something objective—an idea—that could be attained by thought or through revelation. The origin of the current divisions in Protestantism and Anglicanism resides in this obsession with the search for truth so understood. All the movements of the Reformation and their theologians were interested in finding the truth about God, salvation, the church, the Eucharist, and other things. Today, we know that many churches have come into being because each group clung to what it believed was the truth. In sum, there were many truths explained through the various confessions of faith of that period. But when there are many truths, there is no one truth that can stand alone.

In the initial experiences of the people of God given in the Old Testament, theology was not an exercise in defining true concepts, but rather a discourse of faith composed from myths, sagas, divine revelations, and narratives aimed to encourage faith and action. The verb “to define” comes from the Latin *de finire*, “to put an end to” or “to delimit.” This has always been theology’s greatest temptation: to offer the last word, the definitive word on God, Christ, faith, and so on. But theology’s preeminent linguistic resource is a metaphor: “The LORD is my shepherd” (Psalm 23:1). A metaphor is not a definition but a kind of analogy, a comparison with something experienced in day-to-day life. Seeing thirsty deer searching for a stream on a hot afternoon, the psalmist says, “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1).

The appropriation of Greek categories in the early days of Christianity, while equipping theology with a technical language capable of holding a dialogue with Greek wisdom, also kept it in the straitjacket of the philosophy in which truth is the correspondence between the word and the thing. From then on, metaphorical language began to be interpreted literally—the six days of creation, the serpent in paradise, and the mule that spoke to the prophet, for example. Thus, theology experienced its basic ambiguity: the transformation of metaphorical language into metaphysical language.<sup>3</sup> Such a change favored ideological manipulation and has been the source of all dogmatism and authoritarianism of those groups that believe they have already grasped the truth.

Postmodernity questions this metaphysical, abstract, and existentialist concept of truth. It claims that the encounter with truth is not an intellectual adherence to dogma or doctrinal definition, or even conformity to certain key aphorisms. In the twentieth century, classical Christian theology ran out of possibilities for interpretation, and theologians had to seek new guidance and flee from dogma to pastoral thinking in an attempt to reinterpret key themes of the Christian tradition. This is quite challenging for Brazilian Anglican theology; for Brazilians truth is an effective practice of liberation whose paradigm is the person and ministry of Jesus Christ—“the truth will make you free” (John 8:32) and “I am the way, and the truth” (John 14:6). The truth is not an idea that exists in and of itself, independently, in a

---

<sup>3</sup> See John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

metaphysical sphere. Rather, it is a practice of liberation, of placing an emphasis on life, including on difference, sensitivity, solidarity, and joy. What we call truth has more to do with an aesthetic experience of revelation in life than with the intellectual appropriation of this or that idea. Contrary to the modern philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, the greatest challenge is not making a leap from the aesthetic to the ethical, but incorporating the ethical into the aesthetic, because beauty/truth always liberates. Beauty will save the world.

An example: In theology, we are used to delving into dogmatic definitions of God or the dual nature of Jesus. Even the early fathers of the church did this, and the result of the discussions was the dogmas enshrined in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed says that Christ was begotten of the Father, *homoousios* with the Father—a term whose meaning and importance we explain in theology courses. In the Sunday Anglican liturgy in Brazil, this Greek concept is translated as “consubstantial.” A theologian colleague of mine told of an elderly parishioner who asked, “What does ‘consubstantial’ mean?” He answered, “It doesn’t mean very much.” She said, “Ah, I have always figured as much, but it is so beautiful to say it.” My colleague replied, “That’s exactly why it’s in the liturgy—because it is a beautiful word and preserves the mysterious nature of Jesus. That is its value: aesthetic.”

*The Challenge of Opening to Popular Arts and Culture.* In Brazilian theological circles interest in culture has increased considerably in recent years. There was a time when the only areas of knowledge concerned with reflecting on culture were anthropology and sociology. But now, while people talk about globalization with all its consequences, they also extol the particular, specific, and local traits of human groups. There is a certain fear that globalization is a phenomenon that takes away people’s unique character and leads them to a robotized mass culture, a “Brave New World” that minimizes differences. Valuing the ethos of each people and their habits, customs, manner, and religious expression challenges this tendency. So one of the great challenges to Anglican theological education in the Brazilian context resides in taking culture—and more specifically, artistic forms—as a source of theological knowledge.

Unfortunately, the theme of popular culture has never taken center stage in liberation theology, even though it announced itself as a theology of “the people.” The huge number of books written by liberation theologians dealing with doctrinal themes is an attempt to lend

respectability to thought developed in Latin America, in comparison to the academic world of the North Atlantic. This would not be a problem were it not for the reduced presence of “the people” in determining the theological agenda. Those who did people-focused theology were often professional theologians, and their books showed few samples of popular art and culture. This is the main criticism of liberation theology: intellectuals have always dominated it. Meanwhile, the people were busy trying to survive, and in their brief moments of playtime, they sought refuge in diverse popular events. But frequently theologians adopted a concept of “people” that fit their own presumptions and went on to write about this people generally as an ideal type whose artistic production was unknown. Despite the impact of the slogan “theology is born of the people,” few were interested in researching the cultural expressions that circulated in the media or otherwise to capture, for example, the experience sung by certain sectors of the Brazilian population.

This is no surprise: academics have traditionally viewed the arts with a certain degree of distrust and prejudice. In philosophy, for example, the chapter dedicated to aesthetics is invariably one of the poorest in comparison to metaphysics, epistemology, or ethics. Many people—including quite a few academics—still view the arts as a kind of hobby to practice during free time and on holidays, vacations, and weekends, or as a way of alleviating the tension of daily life after a hard day’s work. This is a reduction of art to mere entertainment. One rarely finds a theologian interested in popular art or music. To relate theology to sociology, economics, politics, or philosophy has always seemed more noble than to relate it to some form of art. This is perhaps because artists have not always rigorously abided by a certain standard or style and are always in search of innovation. This lack of stylistic continuity points to a sort of unbearable incoherence for academics, who are often unable to create precise types and classifications in which to pigeonhole the diverse cultural expressions around them.

Unfortunately, one cannot say that the IEAB’s Book of Common Prayer is indigenous and enculturated. It is primarily a translation and adaptation of other books. Only in the past few years has the concern for enculturation of the official liturgy raised its voice. Many of our parishes adopt popular Brazilian rhythms for use with liturgical canticles, and a few use MPB (a popular urban musical movement inspired by Bossa Nova) at mass. But there are still not many parishes that

incorporate the culture of the Brazilian carnival and dance in worship. This challenge is a very urgent one.

*The Challenge of Comprehensiveness.* *Inclusividade* (inclusiveness), the title the IEAB gave its theological periodical, expresses an intention to incorporate inherited tradition along with the new contributions of the present day, with a view to the future. The Brazilian church desires to be a truly inclusive one.

Teachers' colleges and economics and social sciences programs in Brazil have been using the noun "inclusiveness" and the adjective "inclusive" for a long time. For example, they speak of inclusive education or inclusive economic management. These are signs that, despite globalization, there is growing concern about social, economic, and religious phenomena that exclude.

It is difficult to identify a specific time or situation that launched the word in all its theological density. The theoretical discussions of the early 1990s based on exclusion/inclusion in certain sectors of liberation theology led some people to say that the church must be inclusive, that the gospel is inclusive, and that Jesus' practice was inclusive. The word indicates, at first glance, a certain willingness on the part of the church to be less judgmental and more accepting. This point alone is very positive. By gathering experiences from inclusive pastoral initiatives and verifying their similarities, one can gradually see that inclusiveness is a term capable of expressing what daily life has been seeking. The theoretical model arises from the search for an explanatory sense of experience.

It is important to reflect on this concept. No religion, culture, or social group is completely inclusive, so perhaps it is better to speak of levels of inclusiveness. For its own survival, each social group needs to draw clear borders so it does not dissolve into something vague or amorphous. Ideas or practices that do not strike a chord within the group will arise at times, serving as a test for evaluating the level of a group's elasticity. In Brazil, the Anglican ethos has always shown a clear initial willingness to open up and include what previously seemed alien and strange. Bishop Sebastião Gameleira suggests that the term inclusiveness should always be accompanied by the term comprehensiveness:

[I]nclusiveness is not a theoretical doctrine or orientation, or a foundation independent from experience, but rather a pragmatic, pastoral, and political attitude, that is, a practical attitude of the

spirit, a sentiment, a way of being, something like an instinct, or a way of dealing with the reality that characterizes our ethos. So inclusiveness is a habit in the deepest sense of the word, a permanent willingness of the spirit, as those in the Middle Ages would say, that identifies us when we deal with reality. It is our way of being and acting, which is to say it is our way of exercising power. This should express itself in relationships, institutions, and formulations. For this reason we mistrust all claims of exclusiveness and proclamations of pureness of faith or absolute and sole “truths” that impose demands for uniformity, because our axis of reference is not doctrine or the law alone, but rather life, relationships, and dialogue in community living.<sup>4</sup>

For Brazilians, inclusiveness and comprehensiveness are related to tolerance, extensiveness, amplitude, even complexity. Inclusiveness is not a closed-end concept; it cannot be inserted into a Cartesian methodological perspective that highlights clear and objective ideas. It is, rather, a continual exercise to verify possible correlations between our personal and communitarian practice of Christian life and the Holy Scriptures, the history of the church, and theology. This does not mean that Brazilians seek legitimization in the Bible and tradition for Christian practice. Rather, Brazilians have sought to understand more clearly how the Bible and tradition have molded this spirit in them and led them to such an understanding of the gospel.

### *Conclusion*

Theological education in Brazil faces all the challenges that come from independence from colonialism and emergence in a globalized, postmodern world. It is also exploring the benefits of its particular history and context. So in the face of lack of funding for theological education, the IEAB has developed a coordinated system of theological education that includes seminaries and local training and has expanded to include continuing education and advanced training based on regional needs. Theologians in Brazil have found that liberation theology provides the best framework for responding to their context. They are developing a liberation theology that addresses a range of

---

<sup>4</sup> Sebastião Gameleira Soares, “Inclusividade na Pastoral,” in Carlos Eduardo Calvani, ed., *O Conceito de Inclusividade—Simpósio Acadêmico de Teologia Anglicana no Brasil* (Porto Alegre: CEA, 2006), 107.

interrelated exclusions and oppressions, and that sees truth as arising from effective practices for which the paradigm is Jesus Christ. Anglicans in Brazil want their liturgy and theology to be shaped by their experience of faith in their day-to-day lives, experience expressed in popular culture and the arts. For Brazilian Anglicans, “comprehensiveness” is not just about dogmatic opinions; it covers all areas of our faith and our life.