



## **Orlando E. Costas**

*By Elizabeth Conde-Frazier*

Erique Costas (1942-1987). A pastor, missionary to Latin America, community organizer, internationally known missiologist, contextual theologian, and theological educator. Thornley B. Wood Professor of Missiology and Director of Hispanic Studies and Ministries at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and later the Judson Professor of Missiology and dean of the Andover Newton School of Theology. An ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches, USA, and the United Church of Christ. Author of thirteen books in Spanish and English, articles in nearly 40 journals and magazines and contributor to numerous books. Costas served on many commissions and committees at church and community levels including the Commission on Human Rights and the Committee on Evangelism and Education of the Baptist World Alliance.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Orlando Enrique Costas was born to Ventura E. Costas and Rosalina Rivera on the 15th of June, 1942, in Ponce, Puerto Rico. His parents were active lay persons in the Methodist church. He went to the Baptist elementary school of the First Baptist Church of Ponce. His first years of life were spent on the island under the educational love of his home and various churches that were "evangelicas."

For economic reasons his father migrated to the United States looking for work. Orlando accompanied his father and lived with an aunt in the borough of the Bronx of New York City. While his father looked for employment in Chicago. This was a time of culture shock for Orlando. His aunt's husband was of German descent and he cautioned the young boy not to identify himself as Puerto Rican so as to avoid problems in the Irish neighborhood. Two other problems contributed to his traumatic experience of entry into the United States. He had difficulty communicating in English

and he discovered that he was now living in a racist environment. Later in life, as he reflected upon this experience he commented:

*La experiencia con un matrimonio intercultural, en un vecindario interétnico conflictivo (puertorriqueño e irlandés), en una situación escolar precaria y decadente, produjo un choque psico-cultural tan traumático que dejó cicatrices permanentes en mi vida. (Centro Ecuménico de Teología y Pastoral CENETEP, 1995, p. 24.)*

***The experience of living with an intercultural married couple, in an inter-ethnically conflicted neighborhood (Puerto Rican and Irish), in a precarious and decaying educational system, produced such a traumatic psycho-cultural shock that it left an indelible mark on my life. (my translation)***

His theological reflection on this and other experiences as a Latino in the United States influenced his theology as a missiologist as well as his career as a theological educator.

When his father found employment in Bridgeport, CT., the family was rejoined and they became members of the Black Rock Congregational Church. The church took an interest in his musical abilities and gave him a scholarship to study voice with a music teacher from the Julliard School of Music. In his adolescent years however, due to the tensions he felt between what it meant to be evangelical and Puerto Rican in a city that was racist and prejudiced he became rebellious. The church had no answers for Orlando. There was not an understanding of the deep identity struggles that bicultural youth experience and therefore there was no way to help him make meaning of this struggle in light of the gospel. Despite its good intentions, the congregation could not see how it was implicated in the racism of that city and how they expressed prejudices against those different than themselves in the community.

During that time he sought literature that reflected the same struggles he was experiencing with both his faith and identity. It was books such as *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas that revealed to him meaning of being a Puerto Rican minority in the U.S.A. Music continued to be a way to his soul and at a Billy Graham Evangelistic Service, upon hearing the hymn "Just As I Am," Orlando felt that,

*el soberano distante que debía temer se había convertido en mi Salvador y Señor. Ciertamente me había convertido a Jesús el Hijo de Dios, pero Dios también se había convertido a mi. (Centro Ecuménico de Teología y Pastoral CENETEP, 1995, p. 26.)*

***The sovereign distant one to be feared became my Lord and Savior. I had turned to Jesus the son of God, but God had also turned to me. (my translation)***

His parents then sent him to the Bob Jones Academy where he finished his high school years and began college. He developed his musical and dramatic talents and for the first time visited Latin American countries and developed a heart for evangelistic work on the continent. These were years during which his feelings of not fitting into the anglo church persisted and intensified while the awakening of his Latino identity also took place.

In 1961, he returned to Bridgeport and became the interim pastor of the Iglesia Cristiana Discípulos which was about to close. Costas revived the church and it is still an active congregation today. He continued his studies at the Missionary College of Nyack in New York. During those years he pastored in Brooklyn and Long Island, New York. He was married in December of 1962 to Rosa Lydia Feliciano from Brooklyn, New York. Rose steadied his life and became his personal administrative assistant. It was her able help that allowed Orlando to produce so many writings while also being an activist and teacher. Two daughters were born to them between 1963 and 1967, Annette and Dannette.

Costas returned to Puerto Rico and while pastoring the Primera Iglesia Bautista of the town of Yauco, he studied at the Universidad Interamericana with a major in history. On February 13, 1965 he was ordained in the ministry of the American Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico. During this time, as he studied the history of Puerto Rico and Latin America, he affirmed his Latin American cultural heritage and began to question the political hegemony of the United States in Latin America while consciously breaking with its culture. He called this his second conversion for he came to understand that culturally he would never become an Anglo North American but that he had a rich cultural history that he should accept with pride. History in the United States school curriculum represented Latin American countries as inferior causing a child of that heritage to become ashamed of his/her peoples. Studying the history from a Latin American perspective heals that shame. This healing turns around one's understanding of self. For Orlando, this healing experience was not only a product of the tensions he had lived since his first contact with the U.S. but it was an experience that:

*...había sido estimulado e inspirado por mi conversión a Jesucristo. En Puerto Rico pude entender que el hijo de Dios no solo tenía una identidad judía (Jesús de Nazaret) sino puertorriqueña y latinoamericana (el Cristo de la América Morena). De ahí que mi conversión cultural me diera una nueva comprensión cristológica. (Centro Ecuménico de Teología y Pastoral CENETEP, 1995, p. 31.)*

***...had been stimulated and inspired by my conversion to Jesus Christ. In Puerto Rico I was able to understand that the son of God not only had a Jewish identity (Jesus of Nazareth) but a Puerto Rican and Latin American one (the Christ of Brown America). From this point on, my cultural experience gave me a new Christological understanding. (my translation)***

This Christological understanding which sees Christ as one who identifies with those who are of the underside, has been at the center of Hispanic/Latina theology, both Protestant and Catholic, for the last two decades (Costas, 1982; Elizondo, 1983; Pazmiño, 1994; Ortiz, 1993; González, 1996; Rodríguez & Martell Otero, 1997).

In 1966 he began pastoring the Iglesia Evangélica Bautista in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he spent the next three years. During these years he also studied pastoral theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and theology at the Wheaton Graduate School of Theology in Illinois. He also completed a masters in Biblical and Systematic Theology at the Winona Lake School of Theology in Indiana. In 1969 he obtained an M.Div at the Garrett Theological Seminary in Chicago. He also took courses on rhetoric and communication at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

During these same years he participated in different community groups. For two years he was the director of special services for the Milwaukee Christian Center. In 1967 he was a representative of the Hispanic community on the Commission for Social Development of Milwaukee. In 1968 he taught a course on the history of Latin America for the School of Education of the University of Wisconsin. In the same year, he was a member of the founding committee of Latin American Political Education and founder of a Hispanic community newspaper, *La Guardia*. A man of astounding energy and ability to do many things at the same time, he founded the Latin American Civil Union for Civil Rights and the *Universidad del Barrio*. In 1969 he was a consultant for a Transitional Education Program of the Board of Higher Education of Wisconsin. The governor of that state named him to the State Commission on Human Rights in the Division of Industry, Work and Human Relations.

It was in Milwaukee that his activism was fueled by his encounter with those who were exploited, forgotten and oppressed. He learned about political organizing from the African American community. He also reflected on the connection between theology and politics and did not see them as mutually exclusive. This began his deconstruction of the inherited missionary theological legacy that had made these two realms exclusive of one another, leaving the Latino church unable to respond to the fullness of the salvific needs of the context in which they ministered. Within the evangelical framework he began to "do theology" that asked and answered questions within the lived context of his people. An expression of his mature thought on this can be seen in his book *Christ Outside the Gate*. In it, Costas argues that in the incarnation, Jesus made God contextual. (Costas, 1982) We shall look at how this shaped his epistemology below.

The Milwaukee experiences also moved Orlando to ecumenical understandings and work. They influenced his first book, *La Iglesia y su Misión Evangelizadora* (The Church and its Evangelistic Mission) (Costas, 1971). It is his concern for fostering a holistic understanding of evangelism.

From 1970 until 1976 Costas worked in San José, Costa Rica under the Latin American Mission. During those years he carried out a variety of tasks. From 1970-1973 he was professor of communication and missiology at the *Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano* (SBL). From 1970-71 he was the secretary for theological studies for *In Depth Evangelism*, coordinator of Seminary Studies and director of the Regional Center of New York for SBL. From 1971-73 he was the secretary for Research and Communication of the Institute for *In Depth Evangelism*, director of Religious Communication for the seminary. In 1972-76 he was the secretary of Studies and Publications of the Institute for *In Depth Evangelism* as well as director of the Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies (CELEP).

Between 1970 and 1976 he wrote eight books on the subjects of homiletics, evangelism, church growth, history of Protestantism in Latin America and Latin American missiology. It was also during this time that he was visiting professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts. This began to give him perspective for his work in New England in later years. In 1976 he completed his doctorate in theology at the Free (Reformed) University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. His dissertation was titled *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America: Missiology in Mainline Protestantism, 1969-1974*. His mentor was Johannes Verkuyl.

From 1977-1980 Costas was a missionary with the Board of World Missions of the United Church of Christ. He was the editor of *Pastoralia* and of *Occasional Essays* as well as coordinator of the project for *Historia de la Teología y Filosofía en América Latina*, (History of Theology and Philosophy in Latin America). This was a complimentary work to the twelve volume work *Historia General del Cristianismo en América Latina* (General History of Christianity in Latin America) by the commission for the study of Latin American Church History (CEHILA). He also published *The Integrity of Mission: The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church* (Costas, 1979). In this book Costas integrates the two dimensions of the great commission, evangelism and discipleship.

In 1980 Orlando accepted the position as the Thornley B. Wood professor of missiology and director of Hispanic Studies and Ministries at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. As part of his work there, he developed a theological program and curriculum for persons in the ministry who did not have a bachelor's degree called the Eastern School of Christian Ministry.

In 1984 Costas took on his last challenge in the world of theological education. He became the academic dean of the Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts. Yet again, he provided theological studies for minority communities. He forged partnerships with leaders of the New England Hispanic community that included seminary professors, administrators, clergy and lay leaders. He empowered them to fashion the programs according to their needs. These efforts eventually became a part of the institution as they evolved into the Orlando E. Costas Hispanic and Latin American Ministries Program and the Kelsey/Owens African American Ministries program.

In 1987 Costas began his sabbatical by teaching at the Mansfield College in Oxford, England and then went on to Jerusalem as a visiting scholar of the Ecumenical Institute of Advanced Theology in Tantur. Poor health forced him to return early from his sabbatical. When he returned, it was discovered that he had cancer and he died on November 5, 1987. Numerous memorial services were held for Orlando not only in Massachusetts but around the world as persons grieved his death and celebrated his contributions to missions and education.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

As a missiologist and Christian theological educator, Costas' critique of the church was its inability or lack of desire to give evidence of its full appropriation of the knowledge of the gospel by accompanying word with deed and bringing about transformation in itself and society. He had known an evangelistic message that promoted personal change but not the renewal of structures that were unjust. Therefore, Costas worked out of a definition of Christian education that resulted in the change, renewal and reformation of persons as well as structures such that these would conform to the will of God. Let us turn to Costas' understanding of how the mission of the church is tied to its educational endeavor and therefore defines its educational task.

For Costas, the full proclamation of the gospel entailed not only a preaching tour but a fulfillment of the kingdom of God by showing the reality of the living God in a way that powerfully met the needs of people. The proclamation of the good news was directly linked with a demonstration of the good news. This demonstration would include all that would bring salvation in a holistic way to the

lives of people. For Costas, Christian education was a vehicle for not only bringing persons to a cognitive saving knowledge of Christ but for inviting persons to a costly discipleship that was to culminate in obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world. It was also a way to bring life to communities of persons who were oppressed. The educational task was to first bring healing to persons' sense of self through an understanding of a Christ that identified with their struggles and then, the task was to guide persons in the efforts to transform their communities. We have often heard the slogan "Education is the key." For Orlando, it was the key to empowering a leadership that would help to right the relationships in the community that fostered injustice so that there could be reconciliation according to the will of God for God's reign.

Responsible service was the way to live this out and was defined by the context. For Orlando, in the context of Latino community in the United States, this included the multifaceted work of delivering persons from oppressive realities by changing structures as well as initiating services and providing access to services that would bring health or wholeness to the community. This is why Orlando's work in the area of Christian education included a work of advocacy for the adequate education of Latinos in the urban areas where the majority of Latinos in the U.S.A. dwell.

As a part of this work, while he was a pastor in Milwaukee, he developed in the church a scholarship program for young persons and an experimental program to educate entire families in the community where the church served on the south side of the city. As an educational vehicle to the community, Costas used a newspaper for disseminating information to persons on a variety of topics related to family, work, health and religion.

Issues of poverty and education are linked. The capacity a community has for acquiring quality education will affect its ability to gain access to other necessary resources. Education is also linked to the effectiveness of ministry. Costas did not limit his Christian education work to the traditional expressions but saw the importance of how the church and the community were part of an educational ecology. In his book, *The Liberating Spirit*, ethicist Eldin Villafaña comments on the correlation between Christian education and active church leadership in the community. (Villafaña, 1993)

Costas soon came to realize that while programs and other endeavors were necessary as part of the educational ecology of the Latino community, there would need to be a "voice" of the Spanish speaking community in the politics of the city and in denominational structures in order to sustain continued efforts in using education as a means of bringing life to the community. The educational structures were themselves not responsive to the needs of all persons. To change this reality, Costas sought to develop the leadership in the church and the community. This included raising the consciousness of persons so that they would be able to define and research their own problems and seek solutions to them. It also meant helping persons understand how to work within the power structures that controlled education. To do this, Costas took two directions.

One direction involved political organizing. In Milwaukee, in the summer of 1968, when Hispanics and African Americans picketed the Allen-Bradley Company plant charging job discrimination, Costas became involved and organized a Latin American Union for Civil Rights. The educational dimension of the union's work was to develop leadership that would create new types of

organizations to bring about political changes. This work brought about the Latino American youth organization, a youth group whose job it was to bring a sense of cultural awareness to Spanish speaking people on the south side. From his own experience, Costas understood that minority adolescents dealing with identity formation go through a more complex and intense journey as they strive to become bicultural individuals. Their stages of cultural or ethnic identity development are different (Cross, 1978; Kim, 1981; Phinney, 1989, 1990; Phinney, Lochner & Murphy, 1990; Ortiz, 1993) and the development of cultural awareness plays an important role during this time of their lives.

As the union became successful in securing more representation on the power structures of strategic city programs and anti-poverty agencies, their work entered the phase of education. As a result, new programs to educate minority group students for college, neighborhood studies programs and technical education programs were all started.

The first direction of his work included political organization, empowering the "voice" of the community and educational programs determined by the community and for the community. The political aspects and process of gaining a voice are the educational work of empowerment advocated by liberative pedagogies. The work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire speaks of this as creating critical consciousness or "conscientización." (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1989, 1994). Religious educator Frank Rogers speaks of this as one of six educational paradigms in the church and names it mission or justice centered education. It is Christian education that engages the concrete situations of the community. As the passions for justice awaken in persons they research the issues related to the problem and reflect theologically as they seek to take action. Once action or ministry takes place, theological reflection continues to inform and evaluate the work of the ministry. Costas defined it as follows:

*"Missiology has to do with the witnessing engagement of Christians in the concrete situations of life. It is a critical reflection that takes place in their praxis of mission. It is an analytical interpretation, evaluation and projection of the meaning, effectiveness, obstacles and possibilities of the communication of the Gospel to the world. (Costas, 1984, p. 90)*

Christian discipleship, one of the goals of our teaching, is committed action on the road rather than "idle contemplation from the balcony" (Escobar, 2001, p. 54). It therefore requires this type of dialectic between action and reflection.

Costas' theological assumptions as Christian educator were, that the nature of theology is that persons reflect on the faith in the light of their historical context and that they do this in order to live out their faith and fulfill their vocation in their respective life circumstances. Epistemologically then, "context is the stage where all comprehension takes place." Knowledge is contextual and also practical. "it is sensorial activity, shaped by reality and geared toward its transformation." (Costas, 1982, p. 4) Knowledge of God reaches its peak as God is known in human flesh and history through Jesus. In him

*"God's Word has been heard, seen and touched with human hands. As the son of God, Jesus not only reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature (Heb. 1:3), but has definitely once*

*and for all made God contextual." (Costas, 1982, p. 5)*

The Christian educator helps learners to see or know God in their contextual realities. Reflecting on these realities is then an important part of our educational practice. Acting in the midst of this reality to bring justice by transforming that reality in conformity with God's will is the goal of Christian education for Costas. It does not end with cognitive understanding or with personal change but with the "renewal and reformation of persons, groups and structures." (Pazmiño, 1997, p. 87)

The second direction of his educational design was that of creating "pipelines". "Pipelines" bring persons who ordinarily would not have access to theological education into the existing structures by preparing them through certificate and diploma programs. They also provide lay leadership training and continuing education for pastors. If the programs are intentional about developing youth leadership, then they have the potential for cultivating seminary students for the future. These centers may take the form of a Bible Institute or of a program that is accredited by a seminary or Bible College. At times the relationship with the institution is such that it provides facilities for the classes and professors.

When Orlando arrived at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, he wanted to extend theological education in this manner. He acted as a catalytic agent for persons like Dr. Thomas McDaniel and Rev. Luis Cortes to help bring into existence the Eastern School of Christian Ministry at the Eastern Baptist Theological School. The program provides a non-degree ministry training program in a seminary environment for persons without a bachelor's degree who are clergy and active lay leaders or who wish to prepare themselves for such ministries. Today, the program is in its nineteenth year.

In 1984 Costas accepted Andover Newton's invitation to become the academic dean and professor of missiology. He began networking and forming relationships with the church groups and the various theological centers that served the community. Through his office as dean he then offered a series of workshops, conferences and summer courses. These were for lay and clergy alike. They also complemented the existing programs at other institutions so that there was cooperation between institutions and therefore, the resources made available to the community were multiplied. These efforts became the forerunner of the Orlando E. Costas Hispanic and Latin American Ministries Program at Andover Newton. The program was inaugurated in March of 1989.

As with all of the other programs of this nature, Orlando acted as a catalytic agent and gave a basic structure to the program but it was the church leaders, seminarians and professors who supported these endeavors and who gave final form to them. This permitted the community to define its theological education needs and to own the programs. The result of these was a cadre of leaders, both women and men of first and second generation, who would reflect theologically on their ministries and as a result understand and respond to their ministerial contexts in more relevant and transformative ways.

These pipelines served to complete the educational ecology of the church. Costas believed that the mission of the church was to teach the way of justice, mercy and obedience to God. This would involve giving not only a personal but a public witness of one's faith. In order to equip persons for this, the teaching function of ordained ministers has the purpose of equipping the church for mission. Seminary professors are called to prepare the church for her witnessing in the concrete situations of



daily life. The teaching ministry of the laity places the teaching of the church within the reach of the whole people of God. Costas saw laity as mediator theologians who, because they were immersed in the daily routines of life, made it possible for theology to be contextualized by the existentialist struggles of the every day. It was the laity that made the ministry of the church relevant in society.

There were several goals that Costas saw as foundational to these programs. These were: the preparation of bilingual/bicultural leaders, academic excellence, the doing of theology from a Hispanic perspective and on-going dialogue with the Latin American church and theology. It was his dream that Hispanic church leaders would write so that the community would have ministry resources for the preparation of all church leaders working in Latino contexts. This included non-Hispanic leaders committed to doing ministry or forming partnerships in the U.S. Latino context. Over the last ten years, several programs and organizations such as the Hispanic Theological Initiative and the Association for Hispanic Theological Education have been established to carry out these same goals. The pioneering vision of Orlando had been ingrained in many of the leaders who later contributed to the creation of these bodies and endeavors.

Perhaps Costas' largest contribution to theological education was to be a prophetic voice denouncing the sinful practices of these structures and challenging them to find creative means of reaching out to minority groups. He helped to build bridges between the community and institutions as a means of creating a space for the work of salvation related to these structures. In theological education this meant re-creating the structures so that they would provide their services to all groups. Getting to the root of the injustices in these organizations was a step toward this goal. At Andover Newton Theological School, Costas led the school in the implementation of workshops on racism and sexism and courses that prepared anglo pastors for ministry in a multicultural context such as Spanish for ministry. This also included missionary trips to Nicaragua or to the urban contexts in the United States.

In a keynote address at the Faith and Learning Institute on the internationalization of curriculum in Christian higher education, Costas critiqued the provincialism of the Christian worldview of the schools and called for the willingness to "cross intercultural, interethnic and interracial boundaries." (Costas, 1986, p. 11) This is to begin by becoming sensitive to the people who live among us from different ethnic and cultural groups. For this crossing of boundaries to take place students, faculties and trustees are to be involved in learning experiences that expose them to perspectives other than their own. At the Andover Newton Theological School, Costas began to implement this strategy during his tenure as dean. Involvement at every level would facilitate conversations about curriculum that were informed by new insights coming from these boundary crossing experiences. It was always one of the goals that he saw for theological education.

In an article on the contributions of Hispanics to theological education Benjamin Alicea summarizes Costas' aims for theological education (Alicea, 1998). The first was to equip the student for reaching out to persons who have no appreciation or knowledge of the Christian faith. Next was the spiritual formation of "women and men in ministry for the praxis of mission in the world." Lastly, "in response to the fragmentation of the Christian church along racial, class and denominational lines, seminaries should prepare persons to promote Christian unity and human solidarity" (Alicea, 1998, p. 135).

The last dimension of Costas' legacy as a Christian educator is evident in the work of those he disciplined. Costas gave much time to offering guidance and encouragement to many young theologians who counted on him as mentor and teacher. In writing about this legacy, theologian Escobar (2001) writes, "His advice and academic counsel were accompanied by efforts to create opportunities for the younger generation in missiological debates and publishing ventures. In that regard his passing left a deep vacuum in the Hispanic world (p. 55).

Escobar goes on to point out that Costas' influence can be traced among leaders such as the Rev. Luis Cortes who has developed Hispanic Clergy- Nueva Esperanza in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The institution does a work of advocacy, job training, non-formal theological education and evangelism. The organization has also done a work of economic development among the Hispanic community of Philadelphia. This work embodies the "integrity of mission" that Costas championed. In Argentina Dr. Norberto Saracco leads a church based extension program for theological formation that embodies Costas' ideals. Even among those who are not Hispanic Costas left a legacy. Missionary and educator Guillermo Cook wrote, "probably the greatest gift that Orlando had was that of discipleship. He poured himself into the lives of others and more often than not, caused their creativity to bloom." (cited in Escobar, 2001, p. 55). He goes on to describe how Costas helped to open up for him a whole new world of understanding and doing theology from the perspective of marginalized people. Cook's book *The Expectation of the Poor* which is a classic study of Christian base communities was a result of Costas' influence.

In his short life, Orlando's contributions had been recognized internationally. A man of great enthusiasm and passion, he worked on many things at the same time. As a member of a minority group in the United States, education was political for him. It was about the work of evangelization as well as social justice. He mobilized different denominations to respond to the needs of theological education of minority groups. He brought to his task his talents as community activist, entrepreneur and theologian with the hopes of bettering education in oppressed communities.

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## **EXCERPTS FROM PUBLICATIONS**

(1989). *Liberating news: A theology of contextual evangelization*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

The church, as a community of disciples, has been sent to teach the nations to observe all things that the Lord has commanded (Matt.28:19-20). This is an educational task by which the church is to interpret the faith, equip for its practice, and motivate and instruct for its communication. It is through the ministries of diakonia and dikaioma that evangelization gains credibility; similarly, it is through the ministry of Christian education that the church's content is taught, its practice is critically evaluated, its agents are equipped, and its base of support is encouraged.

As an educational agency, the church seeks to accomplish three general objectives: (1) to form (character, abilities, and thought), (2) to inform (the mind, contemplation, and praxis), and (3) to transform (values, individuals, institutions, and communities) for the kingdom of God by grace and power of the Holy Spirit. The church's teaching ministry involves not only exploring the mystery of faith but also leading to the obedience that is faith (Rom.1:5). This ministry is expressed in following Jesus to the consummation of the kingdom (Matt. 28:16-20) and is verified in the creative and renovating action of the people of God (Rom.12:1-2; 1Cor. 4:20; 2 Cor. 5:17). The church finds its educational model par excellence in the teaching ministry of Jesus. To teach the faith is to do what Jesus did with his disciples- namely, to invite them to follow in his steps, enabling them to hear and understand God's Word, equipping them to obey him in all things, and empowering them, by the Spirit, to communicate the gospel effectively. (p. 144)

(1982). *Christ outside the gate: Mission beyond Christendom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

The word "context" has its roots in the Latin contextus which means "weaving together." ... This word represents a conceptual category. It refers to the time-space boundaries of understanding. The context is the stage where all comprehension takes place. It is reality that ties together, and therefore shapes all knowledge.

There is no such thing as timeless or nonspatially related knowledge, since knowledge is a fundamental part of life which is, in turn, a complex, inter-related phenomenon. The Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset used to say, "I am me and my circumstances." In other words, I do

not exist outside my circumstances. Neither do I know outside historical reality. Everything that I am, everything that I know is intrinsically bound to everything that I do. Because knowledge is contextual, it is also practical. It is human sensorial activity, shaped by reality and geared toward its transformation. ...To contextualize is then not only to ask about the past and present of a text in the light of the past and present of its readers and hearers, but especially to ask about its future, its transforming effect upon those who will come into contact with it. (pp. 4-5)

(1986). *Internationalizing the curriculum in Christian higher education*. In R. A. Hess (Ed.), *Internationalizing the curriculum* (pp. 7-17). St. Paul, MN: The Christian College Consortium.

Today international programs are part and parcel of North American Higher Education. And since "Evangelical Christian" colleges are usually smaller it is equally impressive to see how many have developed programs related to peace, economics and developmental issues. Even so, I can not be puzzled by the fact that our schools continue to suffer from what could be described by a provincial outlook, and that it is most notably evident in the curricula. ...institutions of Christian higher education can only become international in outlook if they are willing to cross intercultural, interethnic and interracial boundaries. It is impossible to deal with the internationalization of the curriculum if faculties, trustees and students... do not experience reality and learning from another perspective than their own.

An authentic Christian world view is informed by the conviction that "the whole earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1)- that all of it is the arena of God's revelation and that all of its parts make a contribution to an understanding and appreciation of the whole. If we are to develop a world view which is informed by revelation we have to take seriously the whole of the earth because it is God's world. (pp. 10-11)

(1979). *The integrity of mission: The inner life and outreach of the church*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

To teach obedience to Jesus Christ in all things is the great challenge of world evangelization today. Everywhere we go we are confronted with the question of what kind of disciples we are making if there is no noticeable change in their; mental structure and lifestyle; if their energies are interiorized and exhausted in intrachurch activities rather than in the transformation of their history; if they make no effort to relate their faith to reality; if they leave Christ out of important areas of life- like economics and politics- and reduce him to the realm of the private self or the religious club. (p.24)

The true disciple follows Jesus to the cross and is not ashamed to "bear the abuse he endured" (Heb.13:13). Nor is he motivated by the vision of a "successful life." Rather the true disciple is moved by the desire to be a good and faithful servant of the kingdom.

I know a former Dutch missionary who during the Indonesian struggle for independence decided to be faithful to the demands of the kingdom rather than stand by the imperialistic capriciousness of his country. He felt that to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ at that time was to stand on the side of Indonesians in their just struggle against Dutch colonialism. This both disgraced and stigmatized him in the eyes of his government and Dutch compatriots, as well as resulted in excommunication by his

church and mission board. He decided to bear the abuse of the cross... (p.18)

## RECOMMENDED READINGS

### *Books*

(1989). *Liberating news: A theology of contextual evangelization*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Costas examines the biblical roots of contextual evangelization and focuses on the Old Testament figure of Esther as one who shows us how to respond to the needs of those who live on the periphery of society. He also looks at Jesus in the New Testament as one who ministers to the marginalized in society. As he explores these issues, he bases contextual evangelization on the trinity as community. He defines conversion as a continual transformative process that eventually brings one to active communal commitment. This book serves to give a theological foundation to education as a ministry of social justice.

(1982). *Christ outside the gate: Mission beyond Christendom*. Maryknoll: NY: Orbis Books. This book deals with the aspects of debate in missiology. It focuses on a transition from paternalism to a contextualized gospel. For the Christian educator it challenges one to look at an epistemology based on the incarnation. A teacher will feel challenged to examine his/her role of partnership in the teaching relationship.

(1979). *The integrity of mission: The inner life and outreach of the church*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.

The mission of the church is its heart, soul and hands. Costas speaks of six key areas- preaching, discipleship making, mobilization and the dimensions of the church's growth. The role of teaching and preaching as a way of mobilizing the church for mission as well as how to bring the church to integral growth are explored. Christian educators that wish to link their work of teaching to the mission of the church will find this reading with its theological foundations invaluable.

### *Articles or Chapters in Books*

(1992). Hispanic theology in North America. In L. M. Getz & R. O. Costas (Eds.), *Struggles for solidarity: Liberation theologies in tension* (pp. 63-74). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

An article for those who wish to understand how evangelical Hispanics dialogue with Latin American liberation theology to form a theology of their own that responds to the problematics of their daily lives in light of the gospel.

(1986). Internationalizing the curriculum in Christian higher education. In R. A. Hess (Ed.), *Internationalizing the curriculum* (pp. 7-17). St. Paul, MN: The Christian College Consortium.

This was the keynote address at the Faith/Learning Institute held at Messiah College in June 1986. In it, Costas offers several propositions on the question of Christian higher education and the internationalization of the curriculum that includes trustees, faculty and students. He gives a biblical understanding of what an authentic Christian world view entails and how it informs the school's efforts in relation to this issue. Although delivered almost twenty years ago, it is still timely and

relevant to our reality today.

(1986). Educación teología y misión. In R. C. Padilla (Ed.), *Nuevas alternativas de educación teológica* (pp. 9-22). Buenos Aires, Argentina: Nueva Creación.

This work speaks of mission as the mother of theology and as a dimension of theological education. The roles and relationships of the different layers of educators in the church and theological education are defined. Missiology is named as the catalytic agent within theological education.

(1980). Conversion as a complex experience: An Hispanic case Study. *Occasional Essays*, 5 (1), 21-44.

This article is an excellent analysis of conversion as a continued process. Theology and autobiography converge in this work bringing to the reader a different understanding not only of conversion but of the spiritual journey of a minority person. The article exemplifies how a Hispanic evangelical does theology so that it serves to inform and address the salvific needs of his community. This theological foundation serves to define the parameters for the educational theory and practice of the church.

#### AUTHOR INFORMATION

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier serves as Assistant Professor of Religious Education at Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California.