

## GROWING THROUGH NETWORKING

### CHALLENGES FOR EMERGING AFRICAN CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITIES

CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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#### Introduction

The Centre for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education in Africa (CPCHEA) is delighted to participate in this conference organized by the Overseas Council<sup>1</sup>—an organization whose mission is to come alongside strategic centers of training and education around the world that are strengthening the Church through Christian leadership development.<sup>2</sup> A special word of thanks goes to the Institute for Excellence here in Nairobi, Kenya, for calling us together around the theme “Challenges for Emerging African Christian Universities.”

The questions and topics posed are certainly pertinent:

<sup>1</sup> Based in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. [www.overseas.org](http://www.overseas.org)

<sup>2</sup> The Institute for Excellence in Christian Leadership Development is an international forum developed by Overseas Council (OC) to strengthen leadership skills and organizational expertise for presidents, deans and other senior administrators at partner institutions. Since the first Institute in 1999, more than 1,150 leaders from 236 institutions representing 96 countries have participated. Under the oversight of Dr. Scott Cunningham, OC’s Dean of Leadership Development, the goal of future Institutes is to become increasingly transformational, relevant, integrated, focused, evaluated, cost-effective and donor-friendly. The Institutes are designed to significantly contribute to school development, so identifying specific needs, reinforcing goals and establishing a culture of evaluation help accomplish and effectively implement growth and transformation for these regions of the world. In 2012, OC will hold 10 Institutes for leaders of strategic training centers around the world. The Institutes will focus on questions of “responsiveness.” The formation of Christian leadership needs to be responsive - to the needs of the students themselves and to the churches and the communities which they will be serving. For instance, in light of the “Arab Spring,” what will Christian congregations look like in a Middle Eastern country such as Jordan a decade from now? How can seminaries be responsive to the current challenges and long-term growth of the Middle Eastern Church? \*Four-day Institutes will take place in: Curitiba, Brazil (March 20-23), Hong Kong (April 17-20), Nairobi, Kenya (May 8-11), Beirut, Lebanon (August 21-24), Bangkok, Thailand (September 4-7), Panama City, Panama (September 18-21), Wroclaw, Poland (September 19-21), Eurasia-TBD (October 1-5), Kathmandu, Nepal (October 31-November 3), and Johannesburg, South Africa (November 13-16)

- Who are we and where are we?
- What’s Christian about a Christian university?
- Challenges in becoming a Christian university
- Research on emerging African Christian universities
- Challenges in governance and relationships with churches
- Challenges in curriculum
- Challenges in faculty development
- Integration of faith and learning in the classroom
- Challenges with government and accreditation

In preparing for this conference, participating institutions were asked to respond to the following questions:

- a. Why did you (or why are you interested in making a) transition from being a theological school to a Christian university?
- b. What have been (or are) the challenges in this transition in areas such as: mission of the institution, finances, faculty, faith-learning integration, accreditation, external controls, relationship with church, governance, etc.?
- c. Given where you are in this transition, what are your main challenges?
- d. What issues are you most interested in learning about?
- e. How can this Institute help you?

#### Challenges for Emerging and Existing African Christian Universities

After sampling some of the institutional responses to the second question, I thought it would be good to focus on the faith-learning-integration question. Some of those responses on this topic go like this:

***Africa International University***  
***(Karen, Nairobi, Kenya), formerly Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.***  
<http://www.africainternational.edu/>

The challenge has not been in integrating faith in our programs; the challenge is how best to respond to the expectations of our students. Some did not anticipate that our programs would have such a substantial component of theological integration. Others want to get to the so-called “professional” aspects of the program without spending

too much time on the “theological.” Striking the right balance will work itself out as more undergraduate programs come on line.

Our faculty in both our theological and non-theological programs is overstretched. This is more so at the administrative level; in some cases, we have the dean also heading a department, all the while being the only lecturer in the department. Faculty development in theological disciplines is crucial. Finding faculty members in professional disciplines that are willing to sign our statement of faith is proving to be a challenge.

Financial constraints curtail our desire to employ more faculty members. Conversely, we need more faculty members in order to run programs that will attract more students who, in turn, are necessary to finance the operations of the university.

***African Christian University (Lusaka, Zambia).***

***<http://www.acu-zambia.com/>***

- a. Intellectual labors. Realizing the secular distortions from worldview presuppositions that are so tightly intertwined with the knowledge base-of all academic disciplines, it is a challenge to derive an education philosophy and pedagogy that will allow the student to reformulate an understanding of the knowledge-base in each discipline through biblically discerning scholarship while remaining culturally relevant and engaging. The goal is to expose our students to at least a cursory overview of the historic through contemporary developments of each discipline, exposing them directly to the presuppositions and worldviews that shape the forming knowledge-base in order to afford them ground to exercise their biblical understanding through practice in discerning truth, in light of presuppositions that embrace God’s Word, from error, owing to distortions amplified by man’s fallenness (see, e.g., Hebrews 5:14).
- b. Manual labors. The Scripture lays out God’s purpose for humanity in the cultural mandate (Genesis 1:26-28) and his post-fall restoration to that purpose in the redemptive mandate (Matthew 28:18-20). It is critical that our approach to education maintains the wholeness of life in Christ through a Christian philosophy of education that develops a student in both knowledge and the application of knowledge to what one does, realizing that all true knowledge is derived from God. Such application of knowledge to action in obedience to the Giver of knowledge is a stumbling block in all cultures. In the African culture, the need to bring moral conviction to duty in practicing all things with excellence as unto the Lord is paramount. The lack of a cultural tradition built on Christian values results in an apathy towards excellence that Christian education must holistically address. Viewing education as equipping for fulfilling God’s call according to His will for one’s life should impress a deeper realization of one’s vocation in serving God; as opposed to simply pursuing a career for one’s prideful and material embellishment and personal satisfaction. Both knowing and doing must embrace fulfillment in the grace of God

through Christ. The application aspect is intended to be the field where worldview is tested and transformed, supported by the discipleship of others maturing in their own Christian walk. This is the student labor program. It is here that students will both apply their Biblical understanding to actions, develop technical skills through a variety of labors, and practice serving others in discipleship with those skilled in given fields who themselves are growing as disciples of Christ.

As the two realms of intellectual and manual labors progress during the student’s development, it should become apparent that the two are intimately intertwined, in fact, inseparable. It is through this unifying experience that the holistic nature of life in Christ is meant to be grasped and celebrated as the student realizes the responsibility to directly apply what they know to what they do. This is the practical Christianity embraced by the Puritans. Seeing as what they know is knowledge of God, it becomes equally evident that what they do is their service to God in His kingdom. This, it is hoped, will result in a student geared to grow in Christ and express it through innovative, benevolent work in Africa to spread redemption in Christ through all they do.

***Cornerstone Institute (Cape Town, South Africa).***

***<http://www.cornerstone.ac.za/>***

The Cornerstone board is trying to incorporate the necessary safeguards such that Cornerstone retains its Christian ethos and academic integrity, whilst ensuring a sustainable future. Cornerstone is also working through issues of religious diversity, having taken a decision to accept any student who qualifies to study, regardless of religious background. We expect students pursuing a degree in theology to be Christian; but when it comes to business leadership, psychology, community development, and education, we do not have such a requirement. Faculty members must accept the Cornerstone faith statement and ethos, but we do currently have a small number of Muslim and Hindu students. Our challenge is to determine policies to guide faculty in teaching religiously diverse students while still teaching from a clear Christian perspective.

We would like to hear from other institutions that have been on a similar journey as to how they have navigated these waters. We are especially keen to know if any others have developed a business model that mixes a for-profit company with a non-profit educational institution.

***Justo Mwale Theological University College (Lusaka, Zambia).***

***<http://www.justomwale.net/>***

1. Most faculty members have trained in Theology; this means we need to hire more staff to deal with other non-theological courses.
2. The challenge of changing the mindset of the current faculty to accommodate the new reality.
3. Need to train the faculty in teaching methods; most of them have no teaching qualifications. Most of them trained in Theology and then started teaching
4. Lecturers need to be accredited by a government board (Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneur-

ship Training Authority in Zambia) in order to teach some of the courses we offer.

5. Another challenge is to deal with applicants who are not Christians.

***Scott Christian University (Machakos, Kenya).***

<http://www.scott.ac.ke/>

The principle is simple: “seeking to impact our communities for Jesus Christ.” Making disciples of all nations is our drive. Regardless of their vocation, whether they be pastors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, we desire that our students have an opportunity to become disciples. We have made a decision that there will be core units in every course that deal with Christian formation. This is the reason why our faculty hires will be vetted on the basis of faith, in order to be living examples of true professionals but also disciples to our students.

***Uganda Christian University (Mukono, Uganda).***

<http://www.ucu.ac.ug>

UCU was established firmly as a Christian institution of higher learning, partly in response to social and religious changes that encouraged universities in the region to train leaders without a Christian touch. This means that UCU was established as a Christian university not merely in name but in substance, with a clear evangelical statement of faith embedded in its Instruments of Identity; with oversight by the Anglican Church of Uganda as its trustee body; an educational commitment to the Integration of Faith and Teaching; a full-time academic employment policy mandating personal commitment to Christ; an open-admission policy requiring students to respect the Christian ethos of the university and a curriculum requirement across all disciplines that incorporates four Christian foundational courses, namely: Old Testament, New Testament, Worldviews, and Ethics.

Now UCU has developed four study centers of learning. It has a church foundation and mission statement that proclaims a Christian vision that seeks to provide an education that is holistic. It demonstrates strong support and attention to moral/ethics education. The University aims at integrating the Christian faith in its teaching. Cocurricular Christian activities on campus include worship, fellowship, Bible study, and Sunday services. Campus religious programing is coordinated by the university chaplain, who is an ordained minister in the Church of Uganda. The ethos of UCU is marked by service to the church and to human society. It always tries to create an environment that is conducive to the intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social formation of students; leading them to a commitment to shaping a more humane local and international community.

In her daily business, UCU is always conscious of those unique attributes that justify her role as a Christian university in the provision of higher education in Uganda. The university’s argument is that it is called to offer the kind of knowledge, competencies, skills, and attitudes that her graduates need to function in a rapidly changing society. She designs programs that enable students to think both theoretically and imaginatively, to critique and construct alternatives, and to communicate effectively orally and in writing.

UCU encourages students to see their academic life as one of the acts of worshipping their creator. Providing students with opportunities to discuss religious and spiritual issues in class, supporting religious student organizations on campus, and allowing space on campus for students to engage in spiritual practices such as prayer and fellowship are some of the ways in which UCU fosters student learning and the development of the whole person. Incorporating intellectual engagement into community worship and at the same time maintaining a campus ethos of academic excellence makes UCU a center of “A Complete Education for a Complete Person.” Merging the best of both the academic and the spiritual spheres of a student’s life offers an opportunity for the university to have the most significant impact not only on the students’ learning outcomes, but also on their lifestyle beyond UCU.

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Given the above, it is clear that Christian institutions in Africa and even across the globe have a long way to go when it comes to integrating their Christian worldview across the disciplines. One problem, of course, and particularly for theological colleges, is that too often they do not see the religiously-rooted nature of other academic disciplines—often just tacking theology or chapel services on to an existing (secular) program. Another problem comes from having to support an accredited academic program when there are no Christian teachers to teach it . . . so it cannot be taught from a biblical worldview.

My story entitled *In Search of My True African Christian Identity: Journey from a Dualistic to Holistic View of Reality*, found at <http://cpchea.org/Information.html>, provides a glimpse of the dilemma that our institutions struggle with; as well as of the struggles of finding one’s place in the demanding situations of everyday—the public square—once one’s formal education has been completed. I will restate portions of my story here.

Since Western culture has drastically affected the African culture and worldview (and other world cultures as well) through Christianity, colonialism/neocolonialism, commerce and industry, my study journey has included the understanding of Western thought. As I reflect on this during my study journey, I am motivated by Abraham Kuyper’s confessions in his *Lectures on Calvinism* (2007:11), when strongly asserts that:

There is no doubt that that Christianity is imperiled by great and serious dangers. Two life systems are wrestling with one another, in mortal combat. Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature; while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bend knee to Christ and worship Him as the Son of the living God, and God himself, are bent upon saving the “Christian Heritage.” This is the struggle in Europe, this is the struggle in America, and this also, is the struggle for the principles in which my own country is engaged, in which I myself have been spending all my energy for nearly forty years.

I join Kuyper wholeheartedly and restate the last sentence above: This is the struggle in *Africa*, and this also is the struggle for the principles in which my own country (Kenya) is engaged, in which I myself have been spending all my energy *for at least twenty years*.

The concerns that I raise in my Christian journey tie in with what CPCHEA, the African regional expression of IAP-CHE, is concerned with. For instance, we ask how does the Christian worldview function in the whole of academic life? How does it affect what we do in the everyday practice of academic life? Are the products of Christian higher education agents of holistic societal transformation? Don't we possibly need (where appropriate) the ground breaking work of Prof. Herman Dooyeweerd of the Free University in the Netherlands in the 1930s to develop a Christian philosophy for Africa? As a starting point, doesn't it provide a tried and proven tool for the development of a Christian philosophy that will ensure academic practice in today's Africa that is consistent with a Christian worldview in every discipline in today's Africa; a tool that can be used by Christians working in public universities as well as Christian institutions?

Many will argue that this is an unnecessarily demanding task. Granted, but how do we expect African Christians in the academic world to have a life-transforming impact on today's Africa? What have we reaped from a dualistic Christian worldview? What is the point of many professing Christians who have little or no impact at all in the society? As Dooyeweerd said in the preface to his major work in 1935:

I do not consider it to be a disadvantage if this philosophy does not enjoy a rapid and easy success.... If the elaboration of the Kantian philosophy was deemed worthy of this self-denial it is certainly obvious that those interested in the Christian foundation of theoretical thought should not be concerned with personal success, which is after all of no value. Rather they should be willing to carry on a long and difficult labor firmly believing that something permanent can be achieved with respect to the actualization of the idea concerning an inner reformation of philosophy. For, as a matter of fact, the precarious and changing opinion of our fellow-men is not even comparable with the inner happiness and peace that accompanies scientific labor when it is based upon Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life! (Dooyeweerd 1953, ix)

When the Kenyan philosopher Odera Orika dared to develop a distinctively African philosophy, which he called "Sage Philosophy," the first reaction from the Western philosophical community was to dismiss it as invalid. However, he persisted until today the prestigious Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy recognizes sage philosophy as a valid, if still controversial, philosophy. How much more should we Christians dare to develop a distinctively African Christian philosophy? This is my passion; this is my desire for Africa. It is a demanding task that calls for a commitment from the entire Christian community who sense the urge to support it. It calls us to move beyond our comfort zones and bear the cold and discomfort so that Africa may

come to the Kuyperian assertion that there is not a square inch about which Christ does not say, "It is mine."

I know there are many who will not like to see the realization of the above become reserved for just a few; it is to them that I make this appeal so that they can support CPCHEA's agenda, and others like it, in **Africa** and the rest of the world. I emphasize Africa because currently those who share such views are very rare because of the inherited Christian background and because the resources for such endeavors are minimal due the unfortunate African economic position. In addition, most funded Christian initiatives are those that embrace dualistic worldview tendencies that further cripple our African situation.

I share this experience with the main purpose of appealing to people of like mind to partner with CPCHEA in the journey to contain rampant dualism in Christian higher education in Africa and to also show the importance of not just lecturing but also long term mentoring in the development of African scholarship. I also wish to encourage the exploration of other avenues of developing scholarship other than the traditionally established avenues (formal training in the university).

I am convinced that institutions of Christian higher education that make growing through networking a priority today will be much better equipped tomorrow—to meet many of the challenges mentioned above. CPCHEA is dedicated to linking sister institutions throughout Africa, just as the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education is doing across the globe, as we together urge institutions and individuals to network with us.

### **Growth and networking**

To recognize networking as the ongoing process of interacting with other people to exchange information that supports a common cause and to develop contacts that can open doors to collaborative communication is to acknowledge that individual and institutional growth is hard to come by when networking is a foreign concept. When it comes to Christian higher education, I would have you consider that without a supportive network of Christian scholars and well-informed scholarship, growth stagnates and a lethargic sense of self-satisfaction more easily takes root.

We may not forget that a prevailing network already exists to propagate the secularist agenda—a vibrant network that actively promotes the growth of secularism across the globe.

The question is not whether we should grow through networking, but what are we doing to ensure that we grow through networking with others who are together committed to the cause of Christ in higher education. We would do well to seek to emulate Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch pastor, journalist, statesman, theologian, and politician; he was even the Prime Minister in the Netherlands from 1901–05, as the leader of the Anti-Revolutionary Party founded by Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer. Kuyper had this to say regarding modernism:

As truly as every plant has a root, so truly does a principle hide under every manifestation of life. These principles are interconnected, and have their common root in a fundamental principle; and from the latter is developed logically and systematically the whole complex of ruling ideas and conceptions that go to make up our life and world-view. With such a coherent world and life-view, firmly resting on its principle and self-consistent in its splendid structure, modernism now confronts Christianity; and against this deadly danger, ye, Christians, cannot successfully defend your sanctuary, but by placing in opposition to all this, a life and world-view of your own, founded firmly on the base of your own principle, wrought out with the same clearness and glittering in an equally logical consistency. (Kuyper, 2007:189–90)

What Kuyper said in his day applies equally in today's postmodern world. The forces of today's network of secularism in the world of higher education can only be combated with an equally strong network of Christian endeavor. Whether our institutions are called "universities," as they are in Kenya, or "institutes," as some are in South Africa, e.g., where the law reserves the name "University" for public universities, or some other name, as private institutions of higher education, Africa's diversity should not inhibit networking, but be seen a source of mutual/reciprocal enrichment.

The late Moshe Rajuili (CPCHEA/IAPCHE member) presented a paper "Developing a Curriculum Employing a Pedagogy, and an Administration of Christian Higher Education that Addresses Competing Worldviews in Southern Africa" at our global conference in Nicaragua, in which he explored representative samples of worldviews found in the subcontinent of Africa. Regarding the Southern Africa region, he notes that the region of Southern Africa is very diverse in terms of its history, economy, and the cultures of its inhabitants—generating different and at times hostile worldviews that have led to hostile encounters. This reality sometimes makes it difficult to generalize about Africans and even African culture. Factors contributing to this difficulty include the fact that people are spread over a large and diverse geographical area—plateaus, escarpments, cliffs, and steep slopes often means that access to modern means of fast and effective communication and technology is difficult for many. Secondly, the area has experienced the presence of people from Europe, America, Asia, and elsewhere who have introduced a broad spectrum of different worldviews. Third, within the same area we find clear-cut gaps or divides between urban and rural populations, between the rich and the poor, between the younger and older generations, not to mention the growing ideological differences between men and women in some places. All of these factors result in a multiplicity of worldviews that stubbornly defies any attempt to articulate some sort of basic common denominator or to distill from them some kind of prevailing or monolithic African belief system. However, with all that said, there remain some common religio-cultural motifs in the region and by extension in the whole of Africa that warrants us to think of the African culture and worldview (Rajuili, 2008:78–79). Rajuili seeks to establish why this plays a critical role in people's lives today and to determine the extent to which Christian Higher Education (CHE)

curricula could engage competing worldviews such that people in the region are mutually enriched rather than paralyzed by these differences. He asks whether CHE, methodologically, seriously considers issues raised by andragogy and an African approach to teaching. Finally, he wishes to consider possible administrative adjustments to CHE in the region in order to bridge the gaps between the competing worldviews (Rajuili, 2008:77).

I have reviewed these points to bring our attention, once again, the fact that we are dealing with a complex continent. Given what our brother Rajuili says about his region (just a part of Africa) getting a handle on the situation of Africa as a whole is a daunting endeavor. However, we should take Rajuili's observation as a wakeup call for Christian Africans to come together in a strong and vibrant network to better meet Africa's problems. In this interaction, we cannot only begin to solve the continent's problems but we ourselves will also only grow through networking. Let us look at some leading scholars outside Africa who have grown through strong interaction.

#### **Benefit of network: scholarly enrichment**

I get encouragement when I read the experience of shapers of history like David K. Naugle. I recount his experience as he notes three extraordinary communities that nourished his experience of the Biblical worldview. Let me quote a section of his experience:

Towards the end of the study, however, I experienced a significant paradigm shift from dispensational premillennialism to covenant reformed theology. Like a scientist undergoing a scientific revolution, I began to see and live in the world differently. Exposure to thinkers in this newfound tradition began to solidify and deepen my understanding of Christian worldview. I especially relished the discovery of the "creation, fall, redemption schema as the outline of Scripture and as the basis of the divine economy in history. From then until now, my imagination has been captivated by this biblical vision. . . . (Naugle, 2002:xx)

It is no surprise that his book *Worldview: The history of a concept* is highly celebrated as a one-of-a-kind in our time. Six years later Goheen and Bartholomew echo Naugle's sentiments (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008: ix-xi) in their enriching book *Living at the Crossroads*.

The point I am making is that networking, or simply interacting with others to exchange information and develop contacts to further our endeavors in higher education, is paramount.

#### **Inter- and intra-networking**

Networking needs to occur on three levels:

1. Networking between institutions, between both those that are well established and those that are on the way to becoming a university or an institution of Christian higher education.
2. Networking across disciplines within institutions. This is needed to ensure that the fully integrated Christian worldview is reflected throughout the institution.

3. Networking between academics in different parts of the world who are working in the same discipline, so that they can exchange ideas and problems. It should be a mark of a Christian institution that it does not jealously guard its ideas and expertise, but sees itself as one of the family of faith.

It is through such interactions that we can encourage and challenge each other. We learn best from our mistakes—be they one's own or those made by others. When we work on our own—wanting to avoid the mistakes of others—we can easily end up making mistakes greater than those we sought to sidestep. The better way would be to interact with those we think have made the mistakes we wish to avoid; all the while realizing that those who have made some mistakes may be right on things that we got wrong.

The immediate challenge for developing comprehensive Christian education in Africa lies in locating the role and value of Christian philosophy. Christian theology gets so much more attention in African Christian higher education than does Christian philosophy. No longer is philosophy regarded as the academic discipline that provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for academic endeavor. In most places today, it is seen as simply one discipline among others, with a special task to develop rigorous, critical thinking. This has created a situation in which the academic world has become a collection of discrete, self-contained disciplines, one of which is philosophy—this divergence of disciplines manifests itself in the serious lack of networking within institutions of higher learning (Mutua, unpublished: 9).

An authentically Christian worldview will be one that sees all that exists as rooted in God's creation and held together in a unity by Christ: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together" Colossians 1:15-17.

Can the academic life of our Christian universities reflect this worldview if it is fragmented into multiple discrete disciplines? Since every other discipline is specialized, focusing on one aspect of creation, including theology, which focuses on the faith aspect, is it not an urgent imperative that we launch a renewal of the unifying role of philosophy in the form of a Christian philosophy? Establishing such a foundational base for the theoretical activity of higher education is paramount if our optimism about bona fide Christian higher education is going to be justified (Mutua, unpublished: 9).

### **We are so many in Africa, but we are not effectively networked**

Going by the research that the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) conducted on Christian higher education in Africa, it is amazing to see the number of institutions of Christian higher education on this continent ([http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=38](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page_id=38)). It is also good to learn of very

many Christian organizations and churches; yet, for the most part, we work in isolation.

CPCHEA is not an institution of higher education, but a supportive network for such institutions in Africa. It emerged from a conference held on the campus of the University of Venda (a public institution) in the year 2000. Speakers came from West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and the United States.

Perhaps the most important outcome was the decision to establish CPCHEA as an organization founded by Christian Africans, to provide a supportive network for institutions of Christian higher education throughout Africa, the realization of a long held dream of Dr. Stuart Fowler, Dr. B. J. van der Walt, and others who shared their passion for Africa and integral Christian higher education.

Later, CPCHEA was linked to a global network, IAPCHE, an organization of individuals and institutions, established at a conference held in South Africa in 1975. Its aim is to serve Jesus as Lord by fostering, worldwide, the development of integral Christian higher education through networking and related academic activity. CPCHEA is today the African regional expression of IAPCHE; CPCHEA members are IAPCHE members and African IAPCHE members are CPCHEA members. CPCHEA links African institutions, committed to integrally Christian higher education, with this worldwide network.

### **Networking rather than competing**

*The scrambling for membership problem.*

One challenge that African institutions struggle with is the plethora of organizations looking for partners and affiliate members. When heads of different African institutions meet at various conferences or pan-African collaborations, they can count on receiving a number of well-intended, cordial invitations to join this new organization or that well-established consortium or to partner with another recently conceived Christian global initiative. Membership arrangements are sometimes made hurriedly and African institutions often find themselves with more queries from organizations asking them to be members than they know what to do with. At times, it seems that these organizations appear to be more in the business of growing a membership base rather than in the business of developing vibrant networks. This scramble for membership is leading to a serious vice—to a spirit of competition and not of fellowship. So often, each organization wants to go it alone—which leads to a piecemeal engagement with Africa's problems. CPCHEA is pursuing a different approach. We work to embody the attitude of stewards, knowing that all we have is God's and that if for one reason or the other doing this or that may benefit even a non-member, the opportunity is there for taking. This attitude has rewarded us on the global and regional scene with remarkable membership mainly at the individual level, both in our region and in the global sense.

*Our differences are a blessing, not a problem:*

*The need to recognize our uniqueness.*

Even though each of us exists uniquely, our differences are sooner a blessing than a problem. Our uniqueness is fully realized in community; not in isolation or being enamored

by our individuality, we need each other to strengthen the expanding web of Christian scholarship. The strength of a web depends on the number of strands linked together. Our experiences are valuable for our community of trust; they are needed to establish a healthy network for Africa. When one strand in the network is doing something for which it is well qualified, the point is not that we try to compete with it by duplicating the same, but that we do what we are uniquely qualified for, engaging topics that will undoubtedly serve other strands in the network. In doing so, a community is established and resources are properly utilized (good stewardship). I think this is what Jesus intended in his prayer recorded in the Gospel of St. John chapter seventeen.

To illustrate this: many of the topics addressed at this conference have been handled as well by other agencies right in the neighborhood; for instance, they were featured in our 2010 Faculty Enrichment Program held at Pan Africa Christian University and just recently at Scott Christian University, both in Kenya. Nevertheless, when we lack a strong network, we find ourselves in the situation where one group of Christian scholars does not know what the folks down the road are doing. We can certainly flourish more by growing in network.

These two texts in the Scriptures point to the above. Jesus' prayer:

I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony, that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. The glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be one just as we are one—I in them and you in me—that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me. John 17:20-23

And, Paul's teaching on gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:3-26:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. . . . It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have. The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. . . . But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. . . . But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. . . . So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part

is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

*Newcomers need not worry in a network.*

When we grow in network, newcomers need not worry. Why? Because so often others in the network have faced some of the same challenges, and their experiences (failures and successes) help the newcomers. We are glad that IAPCHE, given its 37 years of dealing with Christian higher education, has many experiences that it can share with newcomers, as does CPCHEA with institutions in Africa who can learn from what others have engaged with success.

### **CPCHEA/IAPCHE: Networking our noble business**

*Our online directory*

Networking and especially building relationships with partners in Christian higher education is our serious business. Our online web directory is growing day by day; this helps to gauge how we are touching those in Christian higher education in different parts of the continent and the world. Our membership is made up of institutions and individuals, and crosses many regions and disciplines. See [http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=530](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page_id=530).

*Our conferences*

At our conferences, we address different regional and disciplinary needs. You just need to access our information channels to be equipped and informed of regional and global events through which all kinds of our members are nourished. I personally have grown from this network, more than words can express. Ours is a nurturing network where all images of God complement each other. See [http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=23](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page_id=23).

*Our faculty and leadership development programs*

These are designed to help integrate the Christian worldview into the teaching practices across the discipline. We continue to wrestle with what the above implies for administration, pedagogy and teaching methodology, and even curriculum. Faculty Enrichment Programs (FEPs) give intensive training in the importance of a Biblical approach to higher education so that educators can better relate their faith to their subject matter, teach more effectively, and provide optimal Christian leadership on their campuses. There is an open invitation to members from around the world to an FEP, in the hope that the international participant will implement the FEP model in his/her country upon returning home. Through our FEPs, we also develop creative and critical and transformative thinking for our young professors—all you need is just to listen to the testimonies across our network to see how people grow through networking. See [http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=384](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page_id=384).

*Our interactive online forum*

This is a recent initiative by which academics with the same interests can interact with each other to exchange ideas and strategies. This is scheduled to be online in the next few weeks.

*Our materials*

Online and hard copies of the *Contact* (IAPCHE's newsletter) are distributed to members regularly. Members share

and receive information. See [http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=404](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?page_id=404). Each issue also includes an “academic insert.” See [http://iapche.org/wordpress/?-page\\_id=413](http://iapche.org/wordpress/?-page_id=413). We also have faith and learning materials that are essential for the integration of faith and learning. See <http://library.icscanada.edu/fln>.

#### *Journals*

*Africa Journal for Transformational Scholarship*: <http://www.cpchea.org/Journals.html>—the official CPCHEA refereed journal. CPCHEA/IAPCHE co-sponsors the journal *Christian Higher Education* (CHE). We also promote *Christian Scholars Review* and *Philosophia Reformata*.

#### **Faith-learning integration**

I began by highlighting some of the challenges of integrating faith and learning at our institutions of higher learning. I have also mentioned our Faculty Enrichment Programs and Faith and Learning materials that may help some to address the challenge. More needs to be said on this topic—possibly in future issues of *Contact*. Possible topics could include: the nature and importance of Christian higher education; how what goes on in higher learning affects the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels positively or negatively; how integral Christian scholarship meets the challenges of dualism, modernism, and postmodernism (see *Van der Walt*, 2001:130-166); and finally how to tackle the discipline-specific faith-learning integration challenge. To jumpstart us on this project and for our African audience I highly recommend B. J. van der Walt’s book, *Transformed by the renewal of your mind: shaping a biblical worldview and a Christian perspective on scholarship*.

#### **Conclusion**

*Africa’s Christian network:*

*Institutional and Organizational exhibition.*

If you agree that we need to grow through networking, why not take a giant step in that direction? I would have you consider the potential depth and lasting value of an all-African networking platform that targets and seeks to serve Christian institutions, organizations, churches, and individuals.

*How can it be organized?*

1. We could identify a region in Africa where this function can occur—Eastern, Southern, Central, or Western regions of Africa (depending on good infrastructure).
2. We could identify a central institution that can facilitate plenary sessions cost effectively.
3. We could identify other institutions or facilities that facilitate panel sessions for respective areas, such as church, organizational, institutional/disciplinary related issues, cost effectively.
4. We could identify specialists who will handle relevant plenary topics.
5. We could identify specialists who will handle relevant panel sessions for targeted groups.
6. We could identify institutions and organizations who can sponsor this.
7. We could provide exhibition spaces where institutions, organizations, and churches could display their programs and exchange ideas.

8. We could keep an inventory of such exhibitions on African Christian initiatives.
9. We could arrange for exhibition follow-ups in respective regions.
10. We could attempt repeat meetings at agreed upon intervals (after 5 or 10 years) depending on how time and resources for such a function could be available.

#### *Benefits*

1. We come to know each other.
2. We get to know what the other Christian institutions are doing.
3. We identify our strengths and weaknesses.
4. We identify those who are strong in the areas where we are weak.
5. We get to know what we are duplicating.
6. We get to know what we are leaving out.
7. We get coordinated, for people will know when, where, how, and why to get in touch with us.

CPCHEA and IAPCHE have the infrastructure necessary to facilitate this kind of meeting of organizations; we are confident that many stakeholders will participate and come on board with their full moral and financial support. Yes, networking with others does take time, doing so will be a beneficial endeavor for Africa—let us try it.

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