Report from Africa:
Missionary In His Homeland

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President's Message

Our first issue of Theologia comes at the unfortunate time when the world is struggling to deal with the shock of the World Trade Center disaster in New York. Our hearts are heavy and we offer prayers to God, the Father, on behalf of all who have suffered such unfathomable losses.

Not surprisingly, there is renewed interest in seeking answers to the chief questions. Such questions as, who is God, how does He want us to live, how does He want us to treat one another, have begun to occupy our conversations, both public and private, in the aftermath of this calamity. In light of this and within these pages, one of our professors offers a brief definition of theology. What does it mean? Why is it important?

Of the many things that have become clear in recent days is this: what we believe is important; people act on their beliefs, whether for good or ill. In this issue, we say goodbye to people whose active faith made a positive difference in our world. We mourn the passing of Dr. Claude Hocott whose vision and leadership guided the college during times of transition. And, we grieve with the Weber family who have meant so much to the school.

Finally, we celebrate the many works being accomplished by people of faith. We share the story of one of our alumni who ministers to bring the gospel to his people in Africa. We tell of our part in the Eastern European Mission literature campaign in Russia. We report on the missionary travels of our professors. And, we interview two ministers about ministry in times of crisis.

To those of you who continue to make this work possible, we say thank you. Your prayers and financial support testify to your belief in teaching and preaching the gospel so that the beliefs of many might be shaped into the image of Jesus Christ.

Carson Stiles

A Brief Introduction to Theology

Word often intimidates, but has friendly meaning

For many Christians, the word “theology” evokes reactions that are less than positive. In part, this comes from a misunderstanding of what theology is. A classical definition of Christian theology is “faith seeking understanding.” While theology may be intellectually demanding, it is not driven merely by intellectual curiosity or academic interests. As “faith seeking...” theology grows directly out of the life of faith and trust desiring to understand more about God’s nature and purpose. Theology is part of loving God with one’s heart, soul, and mind; it is part of submitting one’s whole life—heart, talents, and mind—to the Lordship of Christ.

Theology’s goal, the understanding for which theology seeks, requires humility and can never arrive at a mastery of its subject matter. Rather, theology seeks to enable the believer to “see life whole and steadily through the eyes of faith.” Every believer who attempts to understand his or her circumstances in light of Christian faith is “doing theology.” In this sense, theology is not an option; it is an activity in which every devoted Christian pursuing the tasks of being a mother, an engineer, or a friend regularly engages.

Thus while it is fitting that theological schools may be located near the resources offered by universities and other educational institutions, Christian theology is not done for the academy, nor for other theologians. Christian theology is done by believers and it is done for the church (“from faith for faith”). In the words of a leading theologian of the last century, “Christian theology begins in prayer and it ends in prayer.”

Michael R. Weed is the Billye Gum Hocott Professor of Theology and Christian Ethics.

On the Cover

“Unity” (1960)
Celebrating the empowering spirit of harmony and cooperation is the theme of this watercolor by African artist, Owusu E. Darley of Ghana. From the Nok Museum @ Harlem (www.nok@harlem).
The mention of Africa gives rise to a number of exotic images: safaris and dense jungles; wild animals and endless savannahs; nomadic tribes crossing vast deserts. This rich and varied continent boasts the pyramids of Egypt and the diamond mines of South Africa, the Sahara desert in the north and the lush Victoria Falls to the southeast.

Africa is also the continent to which Christian missionaries have long been drawn. But, not all missionaries are from outside the continent. One in particular, a native of Ghana, returned to his homeland after studying at ICS (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) to serve as a missionary among his own people.

A 1996 alumnus of ICS, Y.B. Nakansah, has just been named acting Principal (President) of Ghana Bible College in Kumasi, Ghana. The Ghana Bible College has an enrollment of 60 full time students in its three programs: certificate, diploma and degree.

Nakansah also serves as Minister of the Word for the Oforikrom Church of Christ in the city of Kumasi. Still weak from a two month bout with malaria, Nakansah introduced Dr. David Worley, former president of ICS, to his congregation when Worley traveled to Ghana in the Summer.

Although it has been in existence only since the mid-1980s, the church has already grown to more than 700 members and is completing a new building. The church also has plans to appoint elders this autumn.

The congregation is active in caring for its members’ needs; and it also seeks opportunities to care for the needs of visitors.

“During the Sunday worship service, seven members of a family were asked to stand and be recognized,” said Worley. “They were not members of the church, but they had come that Sunday to express appreciation for the church’s care in attending their relative’s funeral the day before.”

Nakansah and his wife, Comfort, have three daughters: Patsy, Patience, and Freida. However, he has many “sons in the faith,” Worley says.

The administrator of the Village of Hope, a children’s home and shelter for street children in the capital city, was taught the gospel in his youth by Nakansah.

Not only at the college, but also in his congregation, Nakansah continues to mentor many young men.

Austin Graduate Books Part of EEM Russian Campaign

In order to provide more than 30,000 packages of Bibles and religious literature to people in Russia who have requested them, Eastern European Mission (EEM) launched a campaign among Churches of Christ to raise $1,000,000 on one Sunday in September.

The funds are earmarked for printing and distributing the packages, each of which is to contain one Bible and seven volumes of evangelistic and educational literature. Two of those are books by faculty members of Austin Graduate School of Theology, now being translated into Russian.

One, *Things That Matter*, was written by the entire faculty and edited by Jeff Peterson and Michael Weed. It has become a favorite for adult Bible classes in many churches. The other, *Preparing for Baptism*, by Allan McNicol, was published earlier this summer and has already received wide distribution.

English versions of these two books are available and may be purchased by contacting Austin Graduate.
Ministry in Focus  Preparedness Key to the Unexpected

Dean Smith and Roger McCown are both Ministers of the Word for churches in Austin, Smith of the University Avenue Church of Christ and McCown of the Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ. Smith is also an adjunct professor at Austin Graduate and McCown is a frequent guest speaker at chapel. In this interview with Theologia they share insights on ministry in times of crisis.

TH: This has been an unusually trying time for the American people. In light of the news from New York, how have you spoken to your church?

SMITH: I have been preaching through the Ten Commandments and that week I was to preach on honoring the name of God. I pointed out that those who committed this atrocity did it in the name of God. In the eyes of all the world, this dishonor’s God’s name.

McCOWN: Yes, we have seen something about the name of God. We have seen that to invoke God’s name in my cause does not mean that God blesses my cause. We dishonor the name of God when we take actions in His name, or while wearing His name, that are inconsistent with His nature.

SMITH: I encouraged the church to be passionate about the battle between good and evil. Evil runs right through the human heart; it is all around us.

McCOWN: My sermon was easier; the text I had been scheduled to preach was Psalm 23. So, it was easy to stress the care of God. But, I wonder if preachers all over didn’t bend their texts to this situation.

TH: What are the overriding concerns of the church that you find most challenging?

SMITH: They are confused about justice and mercy. On the one hand are Christians who are crying out for vengeance. On the other hand are those who counsel an easy forgiveness.

McCOWN: I tried to draw a distinction between justice and vengeance. It is easy to fall into vengeance. Like Dean, on the other hand, I have found that there are those who just want to “kiss and make up” and “let bygones be bygones.”

SMITH: When one represents the name of God, He must be presented as both just and merciful. Tillich says that God without mercy is intolerable; no one can stand. But, mercy without justice is mere sentimentality.

You could be called to an emergency at any time.

TH: So, justice and mercy must be balanced?

SMITH: We are called to bring a Biblical perspective to the confusion. When I talked about justice and mercy, I emphasized that, in the cross, someone (Christ) had to pay the price for evil. Evil wasn’t merely ignored or forgiven without justice being done.

TH: Will your preaching continue to be shaped by these events?

McCOWN: My elders encouraged the church to not lose focus by overly concentrating on it. They feel that there is danger in dwelling on it and in our preaching to make too much of it.

SMITH: I think we struggle with how much is enough. I am concerned that we don’t turn to a pep rally atmosphere of triumphalism. On the other hand, there is a danger from thinking, “Oh, it’s over, let’s move on,” and people don’t adequately deal with their grief.

McCOWN: Well, of course, it is not over. There are retired military men among my people and there are those who are subject to being called up. There may be things that they will be asked to do that they will have to reconcile with their faith. There is a sense in which we live in two cities: the city of man and the city of God.

TH: Is there any way to prepare yourself for dealing with such crises as a minister?

SMITH: One of the reasons you keep the spiritual disciplines as a minister with daily devotions: prayer, reflection, and daily readings, is to keep yourself spiritually ready. Like a police officer, you could be called to an emergency at any time.

McCOWN: In order to give spiritual care in emergencies, a minister must always be spiritually ready.

SMITH: And, that’s why it’s important to keep a discipline about the work you do in preparing classes and sermons. Emergencies come at any time and leave no time for the work that you thought you could put off until later.

TH: Is there anything you wish you had done differently?

McCOWN: I am aware of how shielded our children are. But, now this is all over the news and the television screens. I made the mistake of not speaking to the children, of looking into their eyes and asking, “How are you doing?”

Roger McCown and Dean Smith in conversation about ministry in crisis.
Passings

Engineer, church leader, chancellor emeritus, Claude Hocott passes

CHANCELLOR EMERITUS, DR. CLAUDE Hocott passed from this life on September 9, 2001. He was 91.

Dr. Hocott was born in Excelsior, Arkansas and later moved to the Rio Grande Valley where he attended Edinburgh Jr. College. He continued his education at the University of Texas where he earned his BS, MS, and PhD degrees in Chemical Engineering. His long list of academic achievements includes Tau Beta Phi, Phi Lambda Upsilon, and Sigma Xi, all honorary engineering and science fraternities. He was named to the National Academy of Engineering in 1966 and received the “Distinguished Engineering Graduate Award” in 1971. He received the DeGolyer and Lucas Gold Medals from SPE in 1980 and 1981 respectively.

Following his retirement from Exxon Production Research as Executive Vice President, Dr. Hocott continued active service as an international consultant, UT professor, and department chair. He also served as Vice President of the Gulf Universities Research Consortium.

A life-long Bible teacher, he served the Central Church of Christ in Houston as an elder for some 30 years. He worked actively in the formation of the Institute for Christian Studies (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) and served as the corporation’s first president. Most recently, he served as Chancellor of ICS. He and his wife Judy (formerly Mrs. Harrison Matthews) were members of the University Avenue Church of Christ in Austin for 25 years.

Preceded in death by his first wife, Edna Raye (Billye) Gunn Hocott in 1979, he is survived by his wife, Judy; a brother, Dr. Floyd Hocott, San Antonio; sister, Mable Ogle, Rockport; daughters, Elaine Hocott Gainey, Chicago, and Gail Hocott Hancock, Houston; five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Services were held on Wednesday, September 12, at the University Avenue Church. Interment was in Houston after a memorial service at the Bering Drive Church of Christ.

Hocott Fund for Bible Teaching Established

MEMBERS OF DR. CLAUDE HOCOTT’S family have initiated the Claude R. Hocott Fund for Teaching the Bible by making a generous donation to Austin Graduate School of Theology in his honor.

The fund was established shortly after Dr. Hocott’s passing to perpetuate his memory.

The annual proceeds from this permanent endowment will be used in support of excellence in teaching and training ministers, and generally improving the knowledge of God’s Word.

Dr. Hocott was the first president of the Institute for Christian Studies (now Austin Graduate School of Theology) and generously supported the school from its inception. His wisdom, interest, and love for the school kept him involved in its programs.

Contributions to the fund can be made through Austin Graduate.

Jon Jason Otto Weber

1974-2001


Karen, his mother, serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of Austin Graduate School of Theology. He was the grandson of O.J. and Ann Weber whose generosity endowed the James Lee Weber Endowment Fund in honor of their son and Jon’s father who also passed away from a heart attack while playing polocrosse eight years earlier to the month. Gifts in honor of Jon may be made to the fund.

Jon and his wife, Jennifer Boettcher Weber, of Waco, Texas, made their home in Magnolia, Texas. He was a stockbroker with Morgan Stanley from 1999 to the present. He was designated as a certified financial planner and was a graduate assistant for Dale Carnegie Institute. Jon and Jenny were members of Young Friends of the DePelchin Children’s Center of Houston, and the Association of Former Students of Texas A&M. He was also a member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Committee and The American Polocrosse Association.

Memorial services were held overlooking the Pedernales River at the family’s home on their beloved Loco Grande Ranch near Johnson City.
More Blest Indeed

Who is not familiar with the axiom of Jesus to the effect that the search for happiness ends neither in selfishness, nor in possessing? Yet, His saying, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), is a wonderful incongruity. For blessing itself is a grace one receives from a giving Other.

Paul is the one who reports the saying of Jesus in order to instill in us the motivation to follow through with his own teaching: “In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak . . .”

“Bless” is related to “bliss,” and bliss is the sense of contentment that comes when we are at one with our purpose and duty and meaning. Bliss is that state of spiritual joy that comes when our doings matter beyond ourselves.

We have recently witnessed others who have entered into such bliss. In New York, not only firefighters and policemen, but also volunteers, doctors and rescue workers have joined together in “toil to help the weak.” Strangers in distant places have donated goods and funds and blood to help victims and their families. Well-wishers have offered prayers and messages of support and condolences. The personal satisfaction welling up in generous hearts is its own reward. This is bliss.

In this most prosperous land, we seem to be coming to the realization that our truest blessings were never the material ones. We may becoming aware that our character is not the sum of what we possess, but what possesses us; what and whom do we love, and how do we manifest it? In other words, our most gratifying blessings are spiritual. Bliss is an internal state of grace.

Whether entering unselfishly into another’s joy or working to alleviate another’s anguish, Jesus says that bliss is waiting to be received in the abandonment of self to those who need us. We are blessed by blessing, not by grasping (cf. Philippians 2:1-ff).

Unlike happiness, bliss can peacefully coexist in a heart breaking with sorrow. Indeed, bliss may come in the wake of tears, sometimes its own, most often another’s.

Proper Estate Planning
Makes for Good Stewardship

While taxes are a necessary part of the privilege of living in a well-ordered society, tax law is sometimes configured to encourage tax payers to avoid taxes while also helping to improve their society through charitable giving to schools and non-profit organizations. This is especially true of estate or inheritance taxes.

Did you know that it is possible to avoid heavy inheritance taxes, provide an endowment for the school, and leave a larger portion of your estate to your heirs than if you had done no estate planning at all? That’s because of tax laws designed to improve our society by encouraging the building of schools and other people-helping charities.

These instruments are known as Charitable Remainder Trusts.

It is possible through a Charitable Remainder Trust to augment your retirement income by: 1) maximizing your regular interest income; 2) receiving a tax deduction and, thus, increasing your effective capital; 3) provide for the needs of the school.

The law is designed to let everyone win. The donor receives the satisfaction of helping the school while receiving income during his lifetime which may be greater than is currently realized in funds. The school wins because it benefits from your planning. And, our students win because the school eventually receives funds for operations.

Contact the school for more information.

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Austin Graduate School of Theology
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Pay for a Day ______($300) Pay for a Week ______($2100) Give a gift in the amount of $________

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Missionary Travels
Take Professors to Africa and South America

Also traveling was Dr. Allan McNicol, Professor of New Testament. From August 7-14, McNicol and Austin Grad board member, Paul Pape, spent eight full days in Buenos Aires, Argentina. With other church leaders from the states, they were there to encourage missionaries, especially Alberto Pata, an alumnus of the school.

McNicol not only preached and did radio interviews, but was able to experience firsthand what it means to do mission work in a city of teeming millions. "I have the greatest respect for many of our overseas workers who are leading the way in establishing solid churches in large cities. We in America could learn much from them," he said.

Although McNicol and Pape arrived during a grave economic crisis for Argentina, they were greeted warmly and treated with great hospitality.

Dr. Mark Shipp (back row, third from right), with his father, Glover, and the family of Anthony Waihaka, minister in Nairobi.

Dr. Mark Shipp (back row, third from right), with his father, Glover, and the family of Anthony Waihaka, minister in Nairobi.

in The Minor Prophets at the Changamew Training Center in Mombasa, Kenya. Mark also preached at three Churches of Christ while in Kenya.

Mark is no stranger to Kenya, having spent several summers on mission trips with his father, Dr. Glover Shipp.

Dr. Allan McNicol speaks on Argentine radio with Alberto Pata.