

**Wingate, Andrew 1999 – Does theological education make a difference? Global Lessons in Mission and Ministry from India and Britain**

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**Reviewer: Ernst Wolff**

The aim of this publication is to share the author's experience in theological training. Andrew Wingate draws on his experience as lecturer at Tamilnadu Theological Seminary (TTS) in India and at the West Midlands Ministerial Training Course (WMMTC) in England. The exposition has a twofold nature: on the one hand the book is a personal account of the author's work; on the other hand he has made use of long-term case studies in which he describes the ministries of some of the students of the two programmes. This is supplemented by insights obtained from interviews with students and lecturers alike.

The layout of the book is as follows: In the first chapter Wingate explains how he got involved in the kind of theological training that takes challenges like indigenization, inter-faith dialogue and social problems seriously. The remaining chapters of the book can be divided into two sections, corresponding to the two fields in which he has worked. The particular contexts of the seminaries in India and in England are sketched. This includes expositions of the content of the courses, the social environment in which they operate, and the problems of the relation between the seminary and the official churches. The TTS provides its students not only with theological training, but also with a space in which to experiment in different ways to indigenize the Gospel. Training thus includes practical training like the programme on rural skills and the prison ministry, and confronts the students with questions pertaining to dialogue with Hindus and adapting liturgy to the local culture. Great emphasis is placed on the problem of caste. At the WMMTC training is given to lay members of churches with the aim of more effective involvement. The issues here focus more on the relevance of the Gospel in a context where the church is losing ground. An

attempt is made to explore the traditions and experience of the students, while improving their theological and socio-critical skills in the specific context.

The case studies show how students have been helped by their theological education to get involved in their respective areas. The conflicts with established interests of churches and the problems due to social prejudice are described alongside the successes to overcome these difficulties, to help the destitute, to promote inter-faith dialogue and to indigenize the gospel in meaningful ways.

Though the author is reluctant (and perhaps rightly so) to draw general conclusions from his experience, the book is worthwhile reading. The reader will gain insight into creative ways in which theological education could be approached in order to make the church relevant to its socio-political and religious context. The book is an easy introduction to questions of how theological training could be improved and it needs to be followed up by more systematic overviews.

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