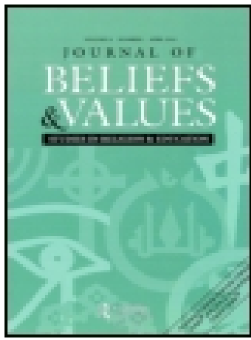

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A diasporic Christian theology: towards an eschatological understanding of theological education in post-communist societies

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ABSTRACT
Christian theology amidst post-communist societies finds itself in a precarious situation as it seeks to emerge from the competing social imaginaries of its totalitarian Soviet past and the democratic capitalism of its future. To do so, eschatological hope will need to spring eternal as it seeks understanding by faith in love of the triune God and its diverse neighbours while reckoning with its diasporic status. As such, this programmatic article succinctly circumscribes the meaning (hope), message (faith), and mission (love) of a diasporic Christian theology with an ecumenical vision predominately for university theological education under post-communist conditions. It seeks to give reason for the eschatological hope within (meaning) that is fixated on the resurrected Christ in the Spirit (message) for the wisdom and flourishing of humanity (mission).

KEYWORDS
Theology; theological education; post-communist societies; ecumenism

Introduction

Post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), over the last 25 years or so, have struggled in varying degrees to emerge from the grips of its recent, totalitarian Soviet past as they embrace elements of a democratic capitalism in hopes of a better future. To be sure, these socio-cultural transformations are occurring *unevenly* as post-communist societies seek to reconstruct what sociologist Charles Taylor (2004, 23) calls 'social imaginaries', namely 'the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlies these expectations'. Part and parcel to these uneven socio-cultural reforms are mediating structures that transmit and disseminate these various social imaginaries. These mediating structures like the economy, civil society, and democratic self-governance bring about a 'heightened sense of their significance to human life … entrenching their independence in the face of state and church [and] bestow in fact exceptional importance on an extrapolitical and secular domain of life' (Habermas 1991; Kostelecký 2004; Taylor 2004, 101). These societal transformations in the CEE have consequently produced a socio-cultural identity crisis as they seek to inculcate new ideals and values in order to 'breed a new man' as Czeław Miłosz, a Lithuanian born,

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Polish poet and 1980 Nobel laureate for literature, once observed at the outset of the Soviet expansion in the 1940s and 1950s (1990, 239). Crucial to this formation is the mediating structure of the university where these new ideals and values are promulgated in order to fashion a citizenry in servitude of the nation state. In this milieu, Christian theology under post-communist conditions finds itself in a precarious situation, asking whether and to what end it fits within the modern CEE university today.

To meet this challenge, Christian theology under post-communist conditions will need to be animated by an eschatological hope as it approaches its task with humility and humour, all the while reckoning with its diasporic status. The charge of this article, then, is to circumscribe succinctly the meaning (hope), message (faith), and mission (love) of a diasporic Christian theology with an ecumenical vision for theological education within a CEE university as it seeks to give reason for the eschatological hope within (meaning) that is fixated on the resurrected Christ in the Spirit (message) for the wisdom and flourishing of humanity (mission). How might theological education in CEE universities in the current post-communist milieu embody such a vision of Christian theological discourse?

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Theological education and the Central and East European university today

The university, according to Stanley Hauerwas (2007, 6), 'is the great institution of legitimization in modernity …', which 'is crucial for the formation of people to be faithful servants of the status quo and, in particular, the modern nation state' and its capitalistic impulses (179). Hauerwas (2007, 82–91) is concerned about whether knowledge of God can be pursued in such modern universities, so he presses two uncomfortable questions: what is a university for and whom does it serve? In other words, what is the *telos* of a university? Does a university exist for the nation state and/or the marketplace, or can it serve these ends as *limited goods* in light of a higher calling?

These same questions are apropos for CEE universities today and are the fundamental questions driving Peter Glanzer's (2011) historical research concerning the secularisation of CEE universities, beginning in 1773 when Christian belief and institutional influence began to wane until the present. Glanzer's key starting point is his adherence to the sociologist Christian Smith's notion that secularisation is a socio-cultural construct designed to elevate national interests and identities above all others. As such, the period prior to the Communist purge (1918–1989) when the Soviets either isolated theological education from the university or disbanded faculties all together, was a period of 'Major Nationalisation' (1773–1918) when the state sought to create a 'supra-national loyalty' by subordinating theological education to its interests. It is this period that many CEE countries sought to *restore* after the fall of Soviet communism in the 1990s when these societies began reconstructing their national identities, including aspects of their religious heritage (Snyder 2003). This restoration, according to Glanzer, offers proof that secularisation is not a foregone conclusion of the progress of history but rather is attributable to the powerful, political force of human agency (172–80).

In addition to Glanzer's analysis, a fourth possible period of secularisation is emerging as socio-cultural leaders of CEE countries transition in varying degrees to some form of democratic capitalism, at the heart of which is the creation of an 'extrapolitical and secular domain of life'. Theological education under these conditions finds itself in a precarious position as the initial reintroduction of traditional religions as part of the reconstruction

of national identity remains not only subservient to national interests, as Glanzer warns (2011), but also is now being pushed to the margins with the creation of this 'extrapolitical and secular domain of life'. Moreover, non-traditional minority religions find themselves not only marginalised by the nation state as they don't fit the constructed national narrative but also scorned by majority religions that seek to mitigate their socio-cultural influence (Sarkissian 2009). While further secularisation at the institutional level, may actually be of some benefit to these non-traditional minority religions, the socio-cultural leaders that pursue elements of democratic capitalism will continue to sequester and push theological education, whether public or private, to the margins, insisting that it sterilise its discourse if it plans to enter the market place of ideas. Theological education under post-communist conditions faces a number of challenges at the heart of which is the task of theology itself (Elliott 2010; Garrett 2016; Raiser 2009; Penner and Kool 2011; Raiser 2009) and seems to be searching for an identity, for meaning, and for its place in relation to the university, the nation state, the capitalist market, and society. How might theological education function, then, amidst such post-communist conditions?

A diasporic Christian theology

Fellow travellers understand they are on a journey between the two Advents of Christ – a pilgrimage from this world to the world to come, what John Bunyan calls the 'Celestial City' in his seventeenth century classic *Pilgrim's Progress*. This journey requires a diasporic disposition characterised by hope (giving the journey its meaning), faith (giving the journey its message), and love (giving the journey its mission). Fellow travellers are enabled by the Spirit to imagine and enact a life well-lived following the Way of Christ. In his *City of God*, Augustine (I.Preface) alludes to an eschatological orientation and diasporic existence of its citizenry: 'I shall consider it both in its temporal stage here below (where it journeys as a pilgrim among sinners and lives by faith) and as solidly established in its eternal abode – that blessed goal for which we patiently hope … but which, one day, is to be the reward of excellence in a final victory and a perfect peace'. With this eschatological orientation and diasporic existence in mind, Christian theology's pursuit of the knowledge of God is never an end in itself but rather is oriented toward fitting and creative performances within God's drama of redemption that glorify God and serve humanity. What Christian theology has to say and do is profoundly different than this world yet strangely common to it. In the end, a diasporic Christian theology seeks to give reason for the eschatological hope within (meaning) that is fixated on the resurrected Christ in the Spirit (message) for the wisdom and flourishing of humanity (mission).

The meaning (hope) of a diasporic Christian theology

John Howard Yoder (1954, 53) contends that 'there is no significance to human effort and, strictly speaking, no history unless life can be seen in terms of ultimate goals. The *eschaton* … imparts to life a meaningfulness which it would not otherwise have'. As such, Christian eschatology is understood as 'a hope which, defying present frustration, defines a present position in terms of the yet unseen goal which gives it meaning'. Implicit in Yoder's statement is the notion that meaning (and hope) is tied to a particular end in that, as Wolfhart Pannenberg (1990, 166) surmises, 'only from the end of history could we fully

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and completely comprehend the significance inherent in the events and forms of history'. While this suggests there are important matters to consider regarding the part/whole relationship, the eschatological character of knowledge, and the dependency of human action on perceptions of meaning, the triune God's promises concerning the *eschaton* have import for the present. To the extent that Christian theology identifies with the risen Christ as its hope, then his resurrection from the dead 'announces the future of that reality', which 'exerts its influence on the present through the hope it awakens' (Moltmann 1993, 18). The prophetic and the apocalyptic literature found in Holy Scripture offer fitting improvisations for how the triune God's eschatological future can be brought into the present as God's promised future captures the imaginations of those in exile with a powerful, counterintuitive political vision of future redemption and renewal, providing meaning amidst harrowing circumstances in the present.

Such eschatological hope is grounded in the identity of the triune God who acts in accordance with his character as seen in the covenantal pattern of promise and fulfilment (Gen 15–17). Jesus Christ is the apex of this covenantal pattern in that his life, death, resurrection, and ascension fulfil, by the power of the Spirit, Yahweh's creation and covenantal promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moreover, the resurrected Christ through his Spirit is the promise of the new covenant and will be fulfilled in the *eschaton* when he makes all things new. This actualisation of God in Christ by the Spirit, according to Karl Barth (2004, 38), 'is characterised as an act of faithfulness, of constancy, of self-affirmation on the part of God, as the consequence of a presupposition already laid down by Him … as the successful continuation of an act which God had already begun, from the very beginning' (53). By doing so, God shows himself to be *Deus pro nobis* – God for us! – the one who can be eternally trusted because he is the faithful God of promise, for he exhibits hope in the face of despair, faith amidst the faithlessness of his people.

This eschatological hope is not simply 'otherworldly' and unrealisable in the present because the incarnate Christ through his Spirit has brought it near to us, albeit not in its fullness. There is, in fact, a danger regarding this eschatological orientation that has currency within the Christian tradition, namely to conceive of God's future hope as a utopia that leads fellow travellers to see this present life as preparation for the next and often results in withdrawal from and indifference to this world. This sort of perspective, though, is not only inconsistent with the abundant life given in and through Christ's resurrection (Jn 10:10) but also, as Moltmann contends (1996, 50), 'is the theory of a refusal to live, and a religious fraud. It is inconsistent with the living God, who is "a lover of life"'.

By contrast, a diasporic Christian theology commends a way of life characterised by the 'marks of the kingdom of God as Jesus describes and embodies these (truth, goodness, justice, peace, holiness, etc.) *in* this world even though God's kingdom itself is not *of* this world'. Striving for progress towards these ends are worthy in and of themselves, even as limited goods, because they demonstrate the value of this life and serve as 'concrete parables or anticipations of God's kingdom, the new creation, under conditions of this world' (Bauckham and Hart 1999, 182–3). Such an existence, even amidst the turmoil of the present, is meaningful as fellow travellers of the Way lean faithfully into the triune God of promise captivated with a subversive vision of his hopeful future brought into the present by the Spirit of the living, resurrected Christ.

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The message (faith) of a diasporic Christian theology

A diasporic Christian theology roots this eschatological orientation and diasporic existence in the *historical* reality of the risen Christ. The boundary between history and its frontier found in the living, resurrected Christ suggests that time and space are relative to him. Being the firstborn from the dead (1 Cor 15:20) implies that he is not constrained by temporality but rather is 'before all things, the one in whom all things hold together, the beginning; he is pre-eminent in all things' (Webster 2012, 35). As such, created reality does not exist apart from him but rather is conditioned by him. As John Webster (2012, 36) notes, 'created being and history are thus not that in terms of which the resurrection of Jesus is to be placed, but rather the opposite'. This suggests that the reality of the risen Christ is determinative of created reality in that our understanding of what is true, good, and beautiful follows from who the risen Christ is. The risen Christ situates created existence and is not situated by it. The resurrection is, thus, the fountainhead from which the message of a diasporic Christian theology lives, and moves, and has its being since the triune God has disclosed God the Son as the preeminent One who is the ground, goal, and life of all things.

The resurrection of the crucified Christ unveils what was previously veiled, in part, by disclosing Christ's identity as love (self-giving), life (aseity), and Lord (deity). As the crucified Christ, Jesus reveals himself to be *love* as he willingly gives his life *pro nobis* in obedience to the Father so that he can take it up again (Jn 10:17). This dynamic movement of 'laying down and taking up' is commensurate with the eternal relations of the Godhead as God the Father sends God the Son in the power of God the Spirit. This dynamism is life, of the one who is 'the first and the last, the living One' (Rev 1:18). As the resurrected Christ, Jesus' *life* is not the prolongation or the continuation of a created existence but rather, because of his participation in the divine life of God, is the very essence and meaning of life itself. He has life in and of himself, *a se*. As the ascended Christ, the resurrection declares Christ's *lordship* as the one who is exalted above all things, including time and space (Eph 1:20–22). His exaltation is not intended to confer a new status upon him but rather to confirm who Christ was before all things (Col 1:17). The resurrection is, thus, the enthronement of Christ to his heavenly session, vindicating him from those who mocked, disparaged, and impugned his character (Webster 2012, 33–6).

The resurrected and ascended Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father is now absent in body; yet, his absence is the very *prerequisite* of his presence in the Spirit (Jn 14:16–18; 16:7–14). The risen Christ's presence through his Spirit is a communicative presence, one that will guide into all truth. The Spirit does not speak on his own authority as if he is some rogue member of the Trinity; rather, he speaks what he hears for the purpose of glorifying Christ. The Spirit of Christ takes the initiative in making himself known. As such, a Christian theology amidst post-communist conditions receives its message from the risen Christ, the living One who participates in the eternal triune life of the Godhead. It is a hopeful message of faith seeking to bear witness to the Gospel of the resurrected Christ who lives and reigns with the Father as his Spirit renews minds and captivates imaginations for performing creative and fitting improvisations in God's drama of redemption set within what John Calvin calls the 'theatre of God's glory' (Calvin 1960, 179).

The mission (love) of a diasporic Christian theology

In his 1919 essay *Art and Answerability*, Mikhail Bakhtin (2003, 1), commenting on the part/whole relationship related to art and life, argued for an 'internal unity of meaning'

as opposed to a mechanistic one on the basis of the 'unity of answerability'. A diasporic Christian life, likewise, has its own 'unity of answerability' as seen in the creation and covenantal call-response pattern between the triune God and his creatures. In other words, a diasporic Christian theology has a performative element – *a mission* – as it finds unity in answering out of its gratitude and poverty to the triune God who made himself known through his communicative acts in Christ by the Spirit, inscribed and normed by Holy Scripture and interpreted within the community of faith, the church.

This call-response pattern is evident as the triune God takes the initiative in creation and in his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, renewed through the prophets, and ultimately consummated by the Spirit in Jesus Christ himself. His calling is like no other as Nicholas of Cusa surmises in his *The Vision of God*: 'For to call into being what is not is to communicate being to non-being. To call is thus (*sic vocare est creare*), to share in being through communication is to be created' (Chrétien 2004, 20). Given this incommensurability, how is it possible for us to hear God's call and respond? If we are to hear God's call, Calvin (1999, 75) contends that 'for whatever we may seem to be … we must be altogether dead in ourselves', underscoring the fact 'that when we are called by the Lord we emerge from nothing'. How can we respond, if we are dead? It is within this impossibility that God makes it possible to answer his call, as Jean-Louis Chrétien (2004, 22–3) notes: 'To be stripped of any possibility of answering by our own means is the first answer given to the call, the answer that has no beginning, the answer in which the call is heard'. To the extent a diasporic Christian theology participates in this call-response pattern, then it will answer by faith in hope out of its poverty, out of its humility, out of its emptiness to the triune God who brings life out of death, being out of nothingness.

God's call in Christ through the Spirit, then, is to a life of self-giving, sacrificial love. If so, the unity of humanity's answerability lies in its loves, disordered as they may be (Augustine, *City of God*, XIV). Through Christ's reconciling power in the Spirit, human beings respond by faith to Christ demonstrating their love for him by keeping his commandments to love God first and foremost and their diverse neighbours as themselves (Lk 10:27). By loving the triune God, fellow travellers embody and testify to the wisdom of Christ in whom are hidden, without exception, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 1:3), the performance knowledge necessary for fitting and creative improvisations. This wisdom is counterintuitive to the world's wisdom, which by way of the cross may lead to laying down our life – to a suffering wisdom – only then for the Spirit of Christ to take it up again (Vanhoozer 1999). By loving our diverse neighbours as ourselves, we seek to cultivate their well-being and foster human flourishing. By doing so, we provide people with a foretaste of God's kingdom, a concrete instance of a future reality in the present moment.

As exiles in this world making our way to the City of God, Christ has come that we might have life and have it more *abundantly* (Jn 10:10). This abundance, like God's wisdom, is also counterintuitive to how democratic capitalism, for example, would construe human flourishing in that properly ordered human loves toward God and neighbour are central to human flourishing rather than any sort of material prosperity. By being united in Christ by the Spirit, we have life, eternal life; and, while it emerges out of our emptiness, it is present in the here and now what will only be fully realised in the future. Hence, the mission of a diasporic Christian theology is to testify to and embody God's wisdom in Christ by the Spirit and foster human flourishing to portray truth, beauty, and goodness as concrete parables

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of God's kingdom in this world that liberate, renew, and open new, unexpected vistas with surprising possibilities when there appear to be none.

Towards an eschatological understanding of theological education in post-communist societies

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, many Central and East Europeans after the devastation, destruction, and death of the Second World War sought hope in the socio-cultural structural reforms of dialectical materialism, a politically social realism brought in by Soviet (re)occupation. Czeław Miłosz (1990, 20) worried about this state-forced indoctrination as it evoked an existential *Angst* and led, particularly for intellectuals, to a nagging and 'irrevocable choice' of whether to 'die (physically or spiritually) or else be reborn according to a prescribed method'. Nevertheless, this new social imaginary offered hope, a sense of belonging, significance, and what many considered to be true progress, considering the aforementioned devastation. What many Central and East Europeans would come to realise was that it was a false hope, one that diminished human uniqueness under a generalised notion of human being in subservience to the communist state.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, a new socially constructed imaginary, namely democratic capitalism (Novak 1991) with its neoliberal ideology (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009), came to the CEE offering a different kind of hope through material consumption to satiate their longings for meaning, identity, and worth in the products they purchase (Cavanaugh 2008). An existential *Angst* remains in post-communist societies today, albeit for different reasons, as people fear a lack of money, job loss, or demotion in social status. What some have, though many have not yet, realised is that consumer capitalism – a poor version of democracy – also offers a false bill of goods and is built upon a counterfeit hope, a promise of liberty and freedom with individual preference/choice as its *telos* (Novak 1991, 54–55). Such egocentric ends are the bane of democratic societies. There is a better way, one in which a diasporic Christian theology participates in an interdisciplinary conversation (what better place than in the university) where post-communist democratic societies in their various forms reimagine a more common existence informed by a common good that engenders human flourishing.

Given space limitations, I can only gesture toward what a diasporic Christian theology under post-communist conditions might say in such a conversation. What I am *not* suggesting, though, is the adoption by university theology faculties in the CEE of some curricula or any specific theological programme. What I am suggesting is the embodiment of dispositions found in the theological virtues of hope, faith, and love, especially when they are nurtured through an array of theological practices, that offer a compelling counternarrative to the emerging democratic capitalisms of post-communist societies calling for a supra-national loyalty to the state. In doing so, these dispositions provide theological discourse their meaning, message, and mission and provoke practical questions to consider by those responsible for creating and instituting the structures and content of theological education. Let's begin, then, with hope and its eschatological character as seen in Augustine's *City of God* where he accentuates the importance of the already/not yet for theological discourse.

Augustine surmised that every society longs for peace (*shalom*), no matter its socio-political arrangement (I.Preface). The question is whether said peace is pursued as an end in itself or as a limited good. As an end, citizens of the earthly city absolutise peace as people

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and governments ultimately desire to impose their will, power, and dominion over others, peace for peace's sake. As a limited good, citizens of the City of God, in its temporal stage, struggle for and cultivate peace in the here and now, all the while knowing that perfect peace and justice will not be attained fully in this life but in the promised life to come (Augustine, XIX.17). This already/not yet pattern found in the disposition of an eschatological hope is crucial for university theological education under post-communist conditions as it need not succumb to the despair present in the emerging democratic capitalist societies of the CEE, evidenced in part, for example, by the most recent suicide rates from the 2014 World Health Organization statistics where 11 CEE countries are in the top 25 worldwide with Lithuania and Belarus leading the way. Rather, theological education animated by an eschatological hope can meet this despair because, as Moltmann remarks (1993, 16), Christian hope is 'forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present'. As such, it participates in mending the fragmentations present in CEE societies with the fitting *patience* of Christ (Halík 2009), bringing meaning to the present. This redemptive participation offers purpose as it is part of Christ's reconciliation of the world to himself, which will only be consummated at the Second Advent. In what ways, then, might theological education in its content, curricula, and praxis inculcate an eschatological hope to redress the prevalent *Angst* and mend the pervasive fragmentation found in post-communist societies?

To be sure, there is the danger of indifference when pursuing the peace and flourishing of post-communist societies in the present, all the while knowing it won't be fully realised until Christ's second coming. Pursing peace as a limited good, though, fully acknowledges the world's contingency *and* its intrinsic worth. This is precisely where the virtue of faith emerges as its message of the resurrected and ascended Christ who sent the Spirit as his communicative presence leads the world into truth, goodness, and beauty. Christ's resurrection not only says that things need not be as they are by triumphing over death but also indicates that temporal reality is of value by appearing in his resurrected bodily form. Otherwise, what's the point of the incarnation and Christ reconciling God's *good* creation? Such contingency and intrinsic worth, in light of God's self-revelation, compel a diasporic Christian theology toward self-criticism as it seeks to cast out its own idols while also necessitating public dissent against the dehumanising powers of the marketplace and the dominating principalities of the nation state.

More specifically, the message of a diasporic Christian theology should decry the deadening and fragmenting effects of consumer capitalism emerging in post-communist societies as consumers shop from product to product becoming more and more detached from the means of production. This endless shopping, central to consumer capitalism, imbues a restlessness and way of trying to find meaning in the world. It is without a doubt a kind of spiritual discipline with its own message of commodification. Theological discourse under post-communist conditions has a different message that should nurture detachment from material things and attachment to the materiality of Christ found in his church and in love of neighbour. As such, material things become the means to this attachment rather than the ends, as seen in our being consumed by God in the practice of our consumption of the Eucharist. This praxis shapes and orders our God-given desires to serve the living, resurrected Christ by the Spirit rather than ourselves (Cavanaugh, 33–58).

Moreover, the message of a diasporic Christian theology should challenge the supra-national loyalty being espoused, according to Glanzer, by the reconstituted nation states of

the CEE; otherwise, it will find itself captive to the state rather than Christ. If theological education perceives itself as part of the state's constructed national narrative and thus seeks to solidify its historic position institutionally, it faces the danger of being subservient to the nation state's narrative rather than to the dramatic, redemptive narrative of the gospel. In doing so, theological education under post-communist conditions loses its critical ability to speak truth to power. In addition, if theological education emanates from the dominate religion, it is also in danger of oppressing other non-traditional minority religions as it fears losing influence and power within the structures of the nation state. Yet, if theological education perceives itself as marginalised, whether by the majority religion or the secularised state, it faces the dual temptation of either retreating to its own isolated cloister focused on the coherence of its own thought and praxis or succumbing to the expectations of the nation state or the capitalist market to be relevant. Either way, falling to these temptations becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hence, being faithful to the message of the gospel compels theological education toward a dialectical yes-no engagement with its context given its diasporic existence and eschatological orientation. In what ways, then, might theological education develop well-attuned communicative skills to the dramatic, redemptive gospel of Christ in order to engage the structures of the nation state while decrying the deadening effects of consumer capitalism?

With that being said, let's consider how a diasporic Christian theology might comport itself within the context of a CEE university and contribute to the knowledge economy when, according to Marek Kwiek (2012), the CEE university is generally considered an insignificant and ineffectual contributor. If theological education under post-communist conditions embodies the theological virtue of love in light of its eschatological orientation and diasporic existence, it has a mission to engage other fields of inquiry from the *inside out*. This is akin to Kenneth Oakes (2012, 263) post-Barthian call for 'positive protest', the idea that 'the tenor of theology is not grumpy cavilling, anxious evasion, or triumphalist assertion, but that theology says 'yes' to all that it can, even as it ventures its own answers to shared problematics'. This means that a diasporic Christian theology works within the space created for it by the Word of God as it seeks to expound upon and enact the themes and concerns of Scripture while continually criticising not only its own discourse and witness but also the disciplinary discourses of other fields of inquiry. To the extent, a diasporic Christian theology through its profoundly different yet strangely common discourse can say 'yes' to other fields of inquiry, it does so with the expectation of 'the clarification and extension of the motifs and claims of Scripture' (Oakes 2012, 263; Webster 2001).

This dialogical encounter with other disciplines is not in search of some 'point of contact' (think here the debate between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner) as if there is some inherent quality, characteristic, or ability within humanity(ies) that allows for the possibility of God to make contact via revelation. Rather, it is more like the *act-of-contact* with someone done in service, not in power, that listens for the Spirit who is active in the created order working and witnessing to the living, resurrected Christ. A post-communist, diasporic Christian theology, therefore, humbly engages with its context in love from the inside out as a positive protest to bear witness to the hope of the crucified and resurrected Christ attested to in Scripture by faith in the Spirit who leads and conforms theology's discourses to Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6).

Let's consider, more specifically, how theological education under post-communist conditions might contribute to the knowledge economy as it understands knowledge to be

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provisional, performative, and proleptic. Knowledge is *provisional* in that human actors only know in part and not in whole because they are finite and fallible (1 Cor 13). This fragmentary understanding undermines the Enlightenment notion of the all-seeing eye of Reason as well as late modernity's overconfidence in its will-to-knowledge. A diasporic Christian theology under post-communist conditions remains open as it humbly discerns how to situate and locate knowledge within the narrative of the gospel in light of its eschatological end, while waiting patiently for the return of Christ who will then prove what is true, good, and beautiful. As such, the post-communist university in the CEE is reminded that knowledge is not absolute, must remain open to dissent, and is coloured by fundamental presuppositions concerning beliefs about God, the world, and others.

Knowledge is *performative* in that what is known necessitates action, not only in the sense of improvising upon God's self-revelation in Christ attested to in Scripture but also through dialogical encounter, both divine and human. This performative element takes the 'other' seriously as it triangulates its knowledge through encounters with others, the world, and God, attaining a measure of understanding via what Clifford Geertz calls 'thick descriptions' (1973; Vanhoozer 2006). Moreover, encountering 'the other' accentuates one of the key motifs of the Christian faith – reconciliation. This suggests not only that humanity needs rectifying with respect to God, the world, and others but also that knowledge itself comes *through* reconciliation, through the resurrected Christ in whom 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden' (Col 2:3). A diasporic Christian theology seeks, then, the performance knowledge necessary for fitting and creative participation in God's drama of redemption. As such, the post-communist university in the CEE is reminded of the social aspects of knowledge and the importance of the act of listening to and understanding the other.

Knowledge is *proleptic* in that the anticipated *telos* of the resurrected and ascended Christ stipulates a new way of thinking about being and time, about reality itself, by illuminating the present with its promised future. Such anticipation reveals what can be, thereby expanding knowledge possibilities and laying the groundwork for creative action in the present. Knowledge is not based on the 'will to dominate' but rather on love as it is 'engaged in a process of movement, and which call forth practical movement and change' in the present (Moltmann 1993, 35–36). A diasporic Christian theology under post-communist conditions infuses knowledge with an expectant hope as its anticipated end expands the horizons of knowledge, defying present frustrations (Hoedemaker 1999). As such, the post-communist university in the CEE is reminded of the promise of knowledge for humanity only when it is considered as a limited good and not as an ultimate end. Knowledge is a means toward wisdom and the engendering of human flourishing rather than a commodifying utility in service of consumer capitalism and/or the nation state. In what ways, then, might theological education advance knowledge by integrating faith and scholarship while participating in inter-disciplinary conversations?

Theological education in CEE universities under post-communist conditions is a complicated and challenging existence as it reconciles the intricacies of its communist and totalitarian Soviet past while meeting its democratic capitalist future. It is faced with a domineering call for a supra-national loyalty to the state and a prevalent *Angst* as variations of democratic capitalism attempt to shape a new citizenry and call for an 'extra-political and secular domain of life'. Considering this milieu, theological education in the CEE university will need to respond creatively and fittingly from the 'inside out' as it embodies dispositions

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found in the theological virtues of hope, faith, and love, especially when nurtured through an array of theological practices. In doing so, the *meaning* (hope), *message* (faith), and *mission* (love) of a diasporic Christian theology under post-communist conditions carries on in the living procession (Barth 1963, 9) set out by the resurrected Christ and guided by the Spirit, as announced in Scripture, in order to testify in positive protest to the wisdom of Christ for the flourishing of humanity. Perhaps, all things being considered, this ecumenical vision of theological education might be a modicum of encouragement for those of us living under post-communist conditions.

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