This timely collection explores critical issues facing theological education in the West Indies, with special attention to the current status and content of Caribbean theology. Contributors represent a number of mainstream Protestant traditions (Anglican, Moravian, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian) and approach their topics from a variety of specializations (Biblical Studies, Church History, Social Sciences, Pastoral Care, and Christian Education). Howard Gregory, who is the president of the United Theological College of the West Indies, has done an exemplary job of representing the diversity of theological opinion at the conference as well as highlighting some common concerns of participants. All participants, Gregory points out, acknowledged a pressing need to address practical aspects of pastoral care and to identify priorities specific to the Caribbean region. In addition, all participants underscored the need for renewed commitment to the task of developing and teaching an "authentic" Caribbean theology, although there is considerable disagreement as to exactly what an "authentic" Caribbean theology should be.

Gregory has also provided a brief and informative overview of earlier Caribbean conferences that addressed issues relating to ministerial training. He offers a valuable and balanced assessment of the important 1964 conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches which culminated in the founding of the United Theological College of the West Indies in 1965. While judicious in his treatment of the history of theological education in the West Indies, he maintains a critical stance toward European and North American influences.

He asks: Are the patterns of theological education established elsewhere in the world adequate to meet the needs of contemporary Caribbean peoples? Do these patterns represent Caribbean religious experience or are they merely a perpetuation of colonialism? His position does not reflect changes in contemporary theological education in North America or Europe. The valuable insights to be gained from Third World perspectives have been incorporated into the curriculum at leading seminaries throughout the world. Ironically, a major barrier to the establishment of an "authentic" Caribbean theology may be that at any given time many of the most eminent Caribbean theologians are themselves teaching in Canada, the United States, or Europe.

Gregory organized this volume following the sequence of presentation and activities at the conference itself. The first chapter consists of a provocative keynote address by Adolfo Ham who reflects on his
thirty years of service to churches in Cuba. Ham seeks to define the challenges faced by Caribbean churches in the twenty-first century and proposes changes in seminary curriculum in order to meet these challenges. His presentation is followed by responses by Gerard Boodhoo and Ashley Smith. Chapters 4, 7, and 10 consist of transcripts of Burchell Taylor's daily Bible lessons.

Especially noteworthy is Taylor's sensitive, insightful, and well-argued exegesis of Paul's letter to Philemon. Paul's letter is particularly problematic for African-Americans because it deals with the return of a slave to his master and has been incorrectly interpreted as providing a justification for slavery. Theresa Lowe-Ching's "Methodology in Caribbean Theology" meticulously examines the significance of a number of pioneers in Caribbean theology with respect to their major problematics, the essential features of their theologies, and the structure of their respective arguments.

It is unfortunate that so many of these pioneers remain unknown outside the Caribbean. Lowe-Ching also laments the dearth of female theologians in the region and the subsequent loss of what women could have contributed to ongoing theological debates. Winston D. Persaud offers an acute, critical examination of global theological education, with special reference to the Caribbean context. Of special note are the chapters by Noel Titus and Barry Chevannes who discuss "Our Caribbean Reality." Titus and Chevannes correctly see Caribbean theological education as reflective of historical, cultural, and geographic factors in Caribbean societies. Both stress the importance of context to the development of Caribbean theological education.

It is unfortunate that Gregory was unable to include all of the papers presented at the conference within this volume. Nevertheless, what has been included is valuable and will provide a permanent record of this historic event in the life of the Caribbean Church. Additional biographical information on the contributors as well as a more extensive bibliography would have been useful. The book is highly recommended.

Source: Glazier, Stephen D., New West Indian Guide/Nieuwe West Indische Gids vol. 72 no. 1 & 2 (1998)