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Dr. Antonios Finitsis
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Dear Dr. Finitsis and the search committee,

I write to apply for the position of assistant professor in Constructive Theology in a Global Context. My research and teaching experience in Western and non-Western Christian theologies, and my calling to teach precisely in these overlapping fields, make me extremely enthusiastic about the position. My dissertation on Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako and Swiss theologian Karl Barth, currently supported by a Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship, is well underway; I have a complete draft of all my chapters and will defend in spring 2014.

This study, directed by Paul Dafydd Jones, epitomizes my concern to set diverse theologies from around the world in dialogue. As the first comprehensive analysis of Kwame Bediako's work and the only project that sets Bediako and Karl Barth in conversation, my dissertation investigates and reconceptualizes the relationship between divine revelation, religion, and culture. From radically different starting-points, these two authors sought to uncouple the connection between the gospel of Jesus Christ and European culture that had been forged as part of the colonizing project in Africa on the one hand, and as self-serving 'true religion' in Europe on the other. Yet they did so with different emphases and for different purposes, and thus developed perspectives that converge and diverge. Bediako employs a high Christology to draw the community towards indigenization; Barth's later work focuses on revelation in the person of Jesus Christ, while also creating room for the revelation of God to unfold in various ways—creating a fascinating opening for a theology of religions. Building on my interpretative work, the conclusion of this study offers constructive proposals for addressing the failure of imagination within much Western theology—and its resulting complicity with imperialist and colonialist ideologies—by developing a non-hegemonic account of Christian identity within a religiously pluralistic world.

My teaching emphasizes student learning through interpreting religious texts, ideas, and movements and aims to encourage a lifetime of reading and learning. In the classroom, students discuss a variety of authors—ancient to contemporary, from the global North and South—while I serve as their instructor and guide. These conversations often spill beyond the classroom and my office hours are frequently filled to capacity. Through writing assignments, I encourage students to analyze texts carefully, reflect critically, and communicate persuasively. More broadly, I employ an interdisciplinary approach to clarify the interconnection of religion and lived

experience for the sake of social justice and toward the pursuit of human flourishing. By taking my courses, students come to understand the reciprocal influences between religious ideas, individuals, communities, and cultures. Depending on curricular needs, I could foresee teaching: Theologies of Developing Areas, Jesus Christ in Global Perspective, Religion and Race, African Theology Past and Present, or Global Environmental Ethics, in addition to standard courses.

My research informs my teaching by drawing together theological contributions from around the world to engage contemporary questions. After revising my dissertation for publication in book form, I will continue studying innovative theological movements, their social consequences, and their impact on lived experience. Presently, I am in dialogue with Kwame Bediako's widow about co-editing a volume of his articles, lectures, and sermons, written in 2000-2008. My next book project is planned to investigate how to understand theological reflection in a globalizing, multiethnic context—particularly the rapid growth of neo-Pentecostalism, an emerging postdenominational perspective that currently has over 600 million adherents.

I am excited by the prospect of teaching at Pacific Lutheran University. Working alongside other accomplished teacher-scholars in the department of religion and having the opportunity to hold small classes that engage students' diverse talents and skills appeal to me greatly. I am also interested in opportunities such as those made possible by the Wang Center for Global Education, especially as building relationships with people and faith communities from other cultures is an essential aspect of the practice of theological reflection in our global, religiously pluralistic society.

At the upcoming AAR/SBL meetings, I will be offering three papers that emerge directly from my dissertation. I am presenting at sessions on Open and Relational Theologies (chaired by Dr. Marit Trelstad), World Christianity, and African Biblical Hermeneutics. I welcome you to these presentations and am available to meet at your convenience.

My CV and transcripts are enclosed and my letters of recommendation are ready to be sent upon your request. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any additional materials; I would welcome the opportunity to speak with the search committee. Having previously lived in Seattle, I have a deep fondness for the Pacific Northwest and would welcome the opportunity to return.

Sincerely,

R.S. Student
University of Virginia