AASS 1 (1998): 5-17

ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

G. T. NG

Theological education has undergone many changes in the past. Seminaries of many mainline churches and across the ecumenical spectrum have reeled under the assault of forces from the right and left. Some have buckled under pressure, others have emerged seemingly unscathed.

Adventist theological education also has had its share of ups and downs. Its beginning around 1870 involved mainly short intensive courses given in the local conferences with Uriah Smith as a principal instructor.[1] The establishment of Battle Creek College in 1874 changed the mode of ministerial preparation from intensive courses to a four-year training course culminating in a Bachelor of Arts degree. The Autumn Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1932 authorized the establishment of a school of theology, but the opening of the theological seminary, under the Potomac University, did not happen until 1937.[2] Since then, colleges and seminaries have mushroomed around the globe, providing theological education at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The approach of the year 2000 affords an opportunity for evaluating theological education. Have the objectives of Adventist theological education changed with time? Should Adventist theological education continue in its present shape and form, or should it become more dynamic? Will theological education with its curriculum and mode of teaching still be relevant to the societal and cultural contexts of the third millennium?

This paper first examines the objectives of Adventist theological education. It then addresses two major issues related to theological education—partnership of the church and seminary, and partnership of theory and practice. This is followed by a discussion on the ethos of an ideal theological school. The article concludes with the focus of the seminary as a redemptive community.

Objectives of Adventist Theological Education

Objectives provide an institution with its modus operandi. Without these, an organization would be left to flounder aimlessly. The primary objective of

[1]Enrique Becerra, "Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Training: Toward an Integrated Whole," a paper presented at the International Faith and Learning Seminar held at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, USA, June 1993, 2.

[2]"Andrews University," *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976), 50. See also Leona Glidden Running and Mary Jane Mitchell, "From All the World, Into All the World," *Focus*, Summer 1984, 8-15.

https://doi.org/10.63201/UMCJ6455

Adventist theological education is to prepare pastors and leaders for ministries in the church, schools, and the world. This objective has not changed much through the years. The first objective of the SDA Theological Seminary, as noted in its 1957-58 bulletin, was "to provide advanced education and training for those workers or prospective workers of the church whose service is to be primarily spiritual, such as pastors, evangelists, college teachers of religion, missionaries, chaplains, writers and editors of denominational books and periodicals, and Bible instructors."[1]

This objective may be achieved through four goals suggested by Donald Messer: "(1) acquiring and transmitting theological knowledge, (2) developing professional skill, (3) promoting personal and social growth, and (4) deepening of Christian commitment and service through spiritual formation."[2]

Secondly, Adventist theological education should empower laity to do their ministries. Recently I was in a country that has one of the highest per capita incomes in Asia. A lady came up to me after Sabbath School. She had learned I was connected with the AIIAS Theological Seminary. Expressing interest, she asked if she could enroll in a seminary degree program. I was surprised by her eagerness for a theological education, considering the fact that her professional training was in engineering. Asked why she would like to study theology, she replied that she wanted to equip herself "to witness more effectively for the Lord." If ever this layperson comes to AIIAS, are we prepared to accept her and to prepare her for *her* ministry as a layperson?

Traditionally, the seminary is the domain of clergy. It is "reserved" for those who occupy the "high and holy office." But a biblical understanding of the *laos*, the whole people of God, recognizes Christian ministry as ministry for the whole church, and not exclusively that of the clergy alone. Christian ministry includes all of God's people, both the clergy and laity. Theological education, therefore, should also encompass the laity in its offerings.

In the light of this renewed understanding, some seminaries have begun offering programs for lay believers. A case in point is the Asia Theological Seminary in Manila, where lay people may obtain a theological education specially tailored for them.

Thirdly, Adventist theological education should serve as a theological center of the church. Theologian H. Richard Niebuhr advocated a dual function for a

[1]Bulletin, Potomac University, Washington, DC, 1957-58, 53. The other three objectives read as follows: "To offer such courses in graduate study and research as shall contribute to the development in the worker of habits of sound scholarship in Biblical theology, and in cognate and supporting fields in harmony with the teachings, philosophy, and objectives of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination; to prepare the missionary and mission appointee for more competent service through courses designed to acquaint him with the characteristics and needs of the people among whom he is to labor, and also to acquaint him with the methods of working which have proved successful; and to provide for the in-service development of denominational workers through short-term courses and workshops in pastoral and evangelistic activities, administrative principles and procedures, public relations, personnel management, institutional board responsibilities, and related fields." Ibid.

[2]Donald Messer, *Calling Church and Seminary into the 21st Century* (Nashville: Abingdon 1995), 22.

theological school: first, as a place where the church exercises its intellectual love of God and neighbor; and second, as a community that brings reflection and criticism to bear on worship, preaching, teaching, and the care of souls.[1]

The various functions of church life need theological reflection from time to time. Worship without reflection can become a meaningless rite. Preaching not understood in its relation to God and humans in a historical context may develop into accidental elocution. Evangelism (with its many shades of meaning) without a theological foundation tends to degenerate into busyness and activism. In short, the life and activities of the church must be informed and transformed by theological understanding, hence the need for continuous study on the part of seminary faculty and students.

A seminary is thus a place in which the biblical, the historical, and the contemporary church are included in one community, where study and reflection are sought and communicated.

Partnership of Church and Seminary

The relationship between the seminary and its church constituencies is not always cordial. The church likes to listen to its best minds, yet it is ambivalent about the perception that scholars tend to undermine orthodoxy and church tradition. The much feared liberalism, with all its polarizing implications, is pigeonholed into intellectualism. Hence, honest inquiry may be misconstrued as disloyalty to the church.

Adding to this unfortunate perception is the aura seminary professors tend to exude. Albeit professing to be servants of the church, they come across as people who demand respect and recognition, and in the process alienate their faith community which establishes and supports the seminary.

The ambivalence of this "love-hate" relationship often precipitates in church leaders' loyal, perfunctory declaration of pride in and support for the theological seminary on the one hand, while withholding financial aid on the other. Some simply slow down or stop ministerial upgrading programs altogether.

Although the seminary and church are held in tension, this tension must be recognized as normal, inevitable, or even necessary. Tension should not give the impression of unsolvable crisis. Both must recognize that although the locales are different, the mission is the same. A seminary serves its constituencies, which in turn support the seminary in partnership.

Messer suggests that a seminary and its church constituencies should forge a new partnership. To facilitate this new relationship, the church should stop playing the blaming game in which the church accuses the seminary of failing to prepare students by not requiring the right courses or being too theoretical. The seminary, on the other hand, should stop being in "glorious isolation," in which both the church and seminary claim different spheres of responsibilities, do their own things, but barely relate to each other. Cooperation has been limited and reluctant.[2]

[1]H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 110.

[2]Messer, 51-52.

In the new millennium, a seminary can do much to assure its loyalty and support for the church constituencies. Perhaps dialogue and consultations should be more frequent and intentional. "Partnership," in the real sense of the word, must be maintained and enhanced.

Partnership of Theory and Practice

Concomitant to the challenge of seminary-church partnership is the perennial dichotomy between the academic and the practical. The traditional rivalry between advocates of academic emphasis and that of professional emphasis can be a thorny problem.[1] The academic camp believes "content," academic, or theological courses should have precedence over courses in practical training, whereas proponents of applied theology regard scholarly biblical and theological studies as peripheral and marginal. "Get on with evangelism" and "finish the work" are all that matters.[2]

Richard Niebuhr suggested a balanced approach to this problem. He proposed that theological education must be set in the context of the activities of the church. The special duty of teaching faculty and students is to participate in the life and work of the church. One cannot understand theory without first understanding the Christian life.[3] "This work of theory cannot stand alone because it is a work of abstraction that proceeds from, and must return to, the concrete reality of life."[4] In other words, the study of theology requires personal involvement. Niebuhr lamented the situation:

> A community of service to men is not as such a theological center; but a school that only studies man-before-God and man in relation to neighbor without the accompaniment of frequent, direct encounter with human *Thous*, serving and being served, has become too irresponsible to be called a divinity school.[5]

Niebuhr indicates further that the theological community itself should get into the context of church activities in order to make this wholistic approach to theological education meaningful. He says this aspect of seminary life is often neglected. "Field work" outside the confines of the school thus applies to both students and faculty. Getting into the life and work of the church does not mean that a seminary should be anti-intellectual. Niebuhr expressed his conviction this way:

> The theological school should turn away from its own proper work of intellectual activity. It means that theoretical activity can be only provisionally and partly separated from the Church's total actions, or that as the theological community is necessary to the functioning of the Church so also the Church's

[1]Niebuhr refers to the two emphases as the intellectualist and the pragmatic approaches. Niebuhr, 126-27. The intellectualist theory begins with idea and then moves on to action. One conceives the idea of God and then moves toward love and obedience. The pragmatic theory, however, regards theory as irrelevant to practice.

[2]The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University wrestled with this issue through the years. For details see Gary Land, "The SDA Theological Sem

[3]Ibid., 128.

[4]Ibid., 129.

[5]Ibid., 131.

other agencies are necessary to that community. Once more the old parable of the body and its members finds its application.[1]

Ethos of a Theological School

Edward Farley, in his discussion of his book *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, observes that any essay on the nature and purposes of theological education is inescapably a contribution to utopian literature.[2] While it is true that innocent idealizations of theological education sometimes give way before the concrete existence of seminary life, it should not prevent us from verbalizing our hopes and dreams. If institutional reality can be made to match the heart's desire, what would the ideal seminary be like? What would be its ethos? Six characteristics are considered quintessential. The ideal SDA seminary would be (1) faithful to the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen G. White, (2) focused on mission, (3) committed to scholarship, (4) relevant to reality, (5) sensitive to change, and (6) dedicated to spirituality.

1. Faithful to the Bible and the Inspired Writings of Ellen G. White

Some contemporary seminaries are suffering from historical and biblical amnesia, forgetting or ignoring the doctrines of incarnation and resurrection, for example. Adventist theological education should not fall prey to such unbelief, diluting and casting doubt on the Scriptures, which are the sine qua non of theological education. In a sermon given during the retreat of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, General Conference president Robert Folkenberg reiterated the importance of seminary teaching as a sound spiritual foundation. He said,

> I would like to encourage the Seminary faculty to continue to resist the temptation to abandon this fundamental commitment to our heritage. Should we fail in this task, our message is undermined and our identity becomes blurred. We will lose the reason for our existence. Our students will be left in an ocean of ideas and conflicting views without a spiritual foundation, without a frame of reference, a cosmic perspective, by which to interpret and evaluate what they are learning.[3]

Folkenberg maintained that the pursuit of truth, of knowledge itself, is not enough. Such pursuit must be accompanied by personal commitment to the truth as found in Jesus.

> The seminary teacher has a duty to expose students to difficult questions and issues, such as those non-believers and skeptics within the church may raise.

[1]Ibid., 133.

[2]Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

[3]Robert Folkenberg, "The Church and Its Seminary: Partners in Message and Mission," Sabbath sermon at the retreat of the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Gull Lake, Michigan, 24-26 October 1997, 1.

> However, I believe the teacher should never leave students 'dangling' where vital issues are concerned. At times I find some Adventist students disoriented and uncommitted. There is no reason or justification of this state of affairs. It is time for us to go back to our roots and heritage, not to tear it down but to build on it.[1]

The inspired writings of Ellen G. White, as the cornerstone of the Adventist heritage, should also find a rightful place in theological education. One of the characteristics of the last days is the emergence of the remnant church spoken of by John in Rev 12:17. This church keeps the commandments of God and cherishes the prophetic guidance of Jesus. For these reasons, this church becomes a target of Satan's attacks.

The significance of the gift of prophetic guidance at the end of time is explained in the OT. Joel the prophet saw sons and daughters prophesying, and old men and young men seeing visions and dreaming dreams. This activity takes place in the time of the "dreadful day of the Lord" (Joel 2:28-29,31). Prophetic guidance is a special gift to the remnant church during the period prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Joel further associates the "dreadful day of the Lord" with a darkened sun and a bloody moon (Joel 2:31). John the Revelator also mentions these signs in the sun and moon (Rev 6:12, 13).

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the renewal of the gift of prophecy in the last days among God's commandment-keeping people has been especially manifested in the writings and ministry of Ellen G. White.[2] More than a century and a half has passed since Ellen White received her prophetic gift. Yet her influence has continued to leave its indelible mark on the church and its operations. She considered her writings a guide to a better understanding of the Bible, "a lesser light to lead men and women to the great light."[3] We would do well to give credence to the gift of prophetic guidance, to teach and model it the best we can.

2. Focused on Mission

The Adventist heritage is firmly rooted in its end-time mission as portrayed in Rev 12 and 14. Rev 12 delineates the emergence of the remnant after the cataclysmic events of the French Revolution, culminating in the arrest of the pope at the end of the 1260-day year prophecy in 1798. The mission of the remnant is clearly spelled out in Rev 14. They are to proclaim a three-fold message for the world in "the time of the end" (Dan 12:4).

The first message calls for the restoration of the true worship of God as Creator because the judgment hour has come. The second warns against the fall of the apostate church. The third counsels against false systems of worship and points to

[1]Ibid., 2.

[2]Her writings, over 100,000 manuscript pages, are considered as divinely inspired. In 60 years, Ellen White wrote about 25 million words. That is equivalent to 1,100 words, or 3 to 4 typewritten pages a day for every day of those years! She also preached 2 to 3 sermons every week. Her quill pen had to be dipped into the ink well to write every 5 words. At the end of her life, her arm would have traveled about 3200 km, moving between the ink well and the paper.

[3]Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald,* 20 January 1903, 15. See also idem, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1953), 125.

the "saints" as holding to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The momentous task of the remnant is to proclaim these three angels' messages by calling God's people out of apostasy, restoring God's true worship, and preparing His people for the Second Advent.

The prophetic messages as embodied in Rev 12 and 14 constitute the raison d'etre of the Adventist Church. The pioneers understood it. This bedrock conviction drove them to mission. By 1990 the conviction that the church is a movement of prophecy had resulted in establishing churches in 182 of the 210 nations then recognized by the United Nations.[1]

The mission of the church should also become the mandate of the theological seminary. Our curriculum, teaching, and seminary life must reflect this commitment. The prophetic conviction must be reiterated in the classrooms. Both faculty and students should be challenged time and again by the command of Rev 10:11 to "prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

As Emil Brunner said, "The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning."[2] The Adventist mission as an end-time movement must not be allowed to be diminished. It should be an integral part of our prophetic consciousness. Such consciousness engenders a sense of urgency which must characterize theological education in the next millennium.

3. Committed to Scholarship

Adventist theological education must be committed to creative and critical teaching, research, and scholarship. Striving and maintaining excellence should be its priority. It is easy to excuse shoddy undertaking because of perceived limitations in language and culture. Yet excellence in one's work is a biblical principle that transcends national and cultural boundaries (Eccl 9:10).

Anti-intellectualism is not new in the history of the Christian church. Misunderstanding the nature of the divine call has led some to exalt the call of God and minimize the need for theological education. "When God calls, He qualifies" is the sentiment. Effective ministry is considered to rest on the authenticity of God's call, not on theological education. As a result, ministers "have preferred to stick simply with the inward call of God, rather than to engage in the discipline of study required for faithful understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures, the thoughtful exposition of theology, and the in-depth appreciation of the cultural history of the church."[3]

Commitment to scholarship has not always been self-evident in the Adventist Church. There have been persons who see seminary education as unnecessary at best and wasteful at worst. Learning and piety are perceived as antithetical. Quotations such as "God can teach you more in one moment by his Holy Spirit

[1]*28th Annual Statistical Report—1990* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 42.

[2]Emil Brunner, *The World and the Church* (London: SCM, 1931).

[3]Donald Messer, *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 68-69.

than you could learn from the great men of the earth"[1] are used to justify their position.

The concern for a converted clergy is a legitimate consideration. Granted, the necessity for spirituality of ministry cannot be overemphasized. Those who are called to convert people to Christ must themselves be converted. But an educated clergy is meant to supplement rather than supplant spirituality in ministry.

Commitment to scholarship must not mean snobbery, however. It should not imply superiority, neither should it give permission to look at the less educated with disdain. The quest for truth and knowledge may be a worthy enterprise, but it is not a license for overzealous theological professionals to become prima donnas pursuing the proverbial ivory tower without consideration of the context in which we live. Theological education must strive for excellence on one hand, and be in touch with reality on the other.

4. Relevant to Reality

Theological education must be in touch with reality. Pastors are trained for ministry in the local church and not in an abstract entity somewhere on the horizon. The church is made up of real people with real problems, and the pastor must be trained and prepared to face the real world. Even those who are pursuing the so-called academic degrees to become teachers will eventually teach ministerial students who will, in turn, face the real world.

Kosuke Koyama, professor emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in New York, who had spent many years as a missionary to Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, and New Zealand, recently proposed the significance of the so-called "barefoot theology" in theological education. He declared that theology before the burning bush must become barefoot.

> The place of theological education is holy ground and the place of *apokalypsis* (revelation). For 500 years theology walked with shoes on, claiming for itself the authority of Matthew 28:18-20, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, Go therefore." But the authority belongs to the crucified, the one who emptied himself (Philippians 2:5-11). At the 1954 Bangkok Conference on Theological Education, theological educators in South East Asia stood before the burning bush, and took their shoes off.[2]

Koyama's barefoot theology is akin to his earlier "waterbuffalo theology." Relating to his experience in northern Thailand where he daily came in contact with farmers, he said,

> I decided to subordinate great theological thoughts, like those of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth, to the intellectual and spiritual needs of the farmers. I decided that the greatness of theological works is to be judged by the extent and quality of

[1]Ellen G. White, "How to Meet a Controverted Point of Doctrine," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 18 February 1890, 98.

[2]Kosuke Koyama, "New Heaven and New Earth: Theological Education for the New Millennium," a paper presented at the general assembly meeting of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), Hong Kong, 17-19 November 1997.

> the service they can render to the farmers to whom I am sent. I also decided that I have not really understood *Summa Theologiae* and *Church Dogmatics* until I am able to use them for the benefit of the farmers. My theology in north Thailand must begin with the need of the farmers and not with the great thoughts developed in *Summa Theologiae* and *Church Dogmatics*. But is not this approach uncouth and even sacrilegious? Do I mean to say that I dare to give priority to the farmers over Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth in my theological thinking? Yes. The reason is simple: God has called me to work here in northern Thailand, not in Italy or Switzerland. And I am working with neither a Thomas Aquinas nor a Karl Barth. God commanded me to be a neighbor to these farmers.[1]

Theological professionals, therefore, cannot afford to be mere theoreticians. One of the great enemies of theological education is insulation from the context in which our people live and to which our graduates go. What would happen if seminary professors, students, as well as board members spent a week sleeping with the homeless and interacting with street children? Would our perspective in theological education be thus drastically transformed?[2] The prophet Ezekiel was able to testify in his mission, "I sat where they sat" (Ezek 3:15). We can do no less.

Not only should theological education be in touch with reality, it should orient itself in terms of the Christian community. Part of the document on theological education consultation in Germany included this very thing.

> We are at fault when our programs operate merely in terms of some traditional or personal notion of theological education. At every level of design and operation our programs must be visibly determined by a close attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the Christian community we serve. To this end we must establish multiple modes of ongoing contact and interaction between program and church, both at official and at grassroots levels, and regularly adjust and develop the program in the light of these contacts. Our theological programs must become manifestly of the church, through the church, and for the church.[3]

But aren't the majority of us in the seminary ordained ministers? Do not our ministerial credentials speak plenty? Professors and students may have been ordained, but ordination is not license to false assumption on the present reality, neither is it a substitute for relevancy. Respected speaker, writer, and pastor, Warren Wiersbe, has found that the professors who help students the most are those who believe in the local church and are active members. Faculty should also reflect a positive view of the church, he cautions.

> That is not to suggest that he whitewash the problems, but only that he share the excitement of the ministry. If he has not pastored himself, let him beware of what

[1]Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (London: SCM, 1974), viii.

[2]Leslie Hardinge, former president of the SDA Theological Seminary, Far East, recommends every seminary teacher conduct a series of evangelistic meetings every year or two. See "Dr. Leslie Hardinge's Dream about AIIAS," 19 February 1994, 3.

[3]"Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education," *Theological Education Today*, January-March 1988, 2. The manifesto is the outcome of the ICAA Consultation in West Germany, 1987.

> he says about the church and ministry. If he has had painful experiences in the church (and who has not, including the apostle Paul?), then let him admit it and learn to deal positively with it.[1]

Theological education must also be relevant to culture. Theological education in the past has largely been influenced by a model that does not meet the needs of the Two-thirds World. Emilio Castro, former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, asserts that traditional theological education has been dominated by a professional model that is not suitable for most small churches around the world. Moreover, the Two-thirds World has limited resources and can ill afford the full-time salary model of professional ministry. Further, theological education is out of reach of the financial capability of most ministers. Lastly, theological education often estranges people from the very culture they profess to serve.[2] Seminarians sometimes become misfits in their own culture.

5. Sensitive to Change

Cataclysmic changes are taking place all around us. Change is a way of life, and adapting to social, global, and technological changes can be a challenge. Some are paralyzed by change, others are ambivalent about it.

The emergence of the new information superhighway presents unique opportunities for a seminary that should be at the forefront of exploring new ways of communicating the Three Angels' Messages to the world. We have to be prepared for radical changes in the area of theological education by extension, for example.

What are the implications a globalized world has on theological education? French philosopher Jacques Ellul's often repeated statement, "Think globally and act locally," should also apply to theological education. Besides globalizing theological education by expanding its extension program, a seminary may have to adjust its curriculum to expand students' global vision and fit them in multiple contexts around the world.

It does not mean, however, that one's local context should be neglected. Ellen White's counsel is well taken, "Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but all can be home missionaries in their families and neighborhoods."[3] Oswald J. Smith concurred with this concept when he said, "The light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home." "Salinization of mission" ("traveling over salt water")[4] may be glamorous, but is not a must. One's ministry begins at one's doorstep.

[1]David and Warren Wiersbe, *Making Sense of the Ministry* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 137.

[2]Emilio Castro, foreword to *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension*, ed. Ross Kinsler (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), ix-xi.

[3]Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:30.

[4]Robert A Evans, foreword to *Jesus Weeps: Global Encounters on Our Doorstep*, by Harold J. Recinos (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 10.

6. Dedicated to Spirituality

Are spirituality and a theological seminary contradictions in terms, or does one presuppose the other?

The notion that a theological seminary is heaven on earth, where godly saints are cranked out periodically, needs to be demythologized. It is incongruous to some that a seminary and spirituality are not necessarily synonymous.

It is sometimes said that the danger of theological education is producing graduates with swelled heads but with empty hearts! Accumulation of knowledge can give way to a seeming detachment from God. The academic pressure cooker leaves no room for spiritual formation.

Noted theologian C. S. Song highlights the problem of "poverty of spirituality" among seminarians by painting a picture familiar at any given seminary. Once or twice a week, seminary students leave their classrooms and head for the chapel, where they spend the next hour in worship. The former is an exercise called "theological" and the latter "spiritual." Song explains the implication of the phenomenon:

> Theology classroom is not chapel, and chapel is not theology classroom. Theological exercise and spiritual exercise are two different things related to each other only incidentally. Chapel is the heart of the community and classroom but not in the chapel. The word 'spirituality' is not a concept and a reality to grapple with in the classroom except for some courses designed to deal with it. 'Spirituality' is what chapel stands for—worship, meditation, prayer, singing of hymns, and greeting one another with a kiss of peace. Theology classroom and chapel are two different worlds.[1]

Perhaps the dichotomy between classroom and chapel experiences is the crux of the issue with spirituality. To Song, the "poverty of spirituality" in theological education is due to the problem of divorce of the classroom and the chapel from each other.[2] Therefore, to improve spirituality by increasing the frequency of "spiritual activities" such as chapel, prayer, and meditation may be necessary, but is not enough. In fact, doing so risks missing the point. The issue must be the narrowing of the gulf between classroom and chapel. The twain should be considered kith and kin. They should work hand in glove. Theological formation is accompanied vis-à-vis spiritual formation. The classroom is the place where commitment to God and His word and mission is deepened. The chapel is not a pause from classroom but an extension of it. Classroom is not a distraction from chapel but it's continuation. Classroom and chapel are thus part and parcel of faith journey and spiritual formation.

[1]C. S. Song, "Between Classroom and Chapel," in *Spiritual Formation in Asian Theological Education*, ed. Samuel Amirtham and Yeow Choo Lak (Singapore: Association for Theological Education in South East Asia, 1988), 55.

[2]Ibid., 56.

Seminary as a Redemptive Community

Amidst the endless rounds of teaching and research in a theological seminary, it is easy to forget its redemptive aspect. Besides being an academic community, a seminary is also a redemptive community. It is biblically incumbent for us to make it a community of humility and love.

Donald Messer, president of the Iliff School of Theology of the United Methodist Church, told of an experience at an Episcopal ordination service he attended. Despite the beauty of the liturgy and the solemnity of the occasion, he felt uncomfortable because of the memory of a previous ordination he had attended in which the one to be ordained was required to lie prostrate before the bishop. He was afraid the same experience would be repeated. He was relieved, however, when the ordaining bishop did not require the candidate to lie prostrate, but instead knelt down and kissed her feet![1]

The bishop's demonstration of authentic humility epitomized the theological understanding of servanthood inherent in Christian ministry that is really an extension of Christ's ministry. Similarly, a seminary is called to authentic humility and servanthood. A seminary should overcome hierarchical distance, apathy, and sometimes, arrogance, by assuming the posture of Christ washing the disciples' feet. It is not to be self-absorbing. It is not to be a proverbial ivory tower, out of reach of reality and out of touch with its church constituencies. In short, a seminary must be a servant of a servant God.

In Asia, the carabao is a symbol of ultimate servanthood. It is a beast of burden, tough yet obedient, ever ready to submit to the master's wishes, plowing and harrowing the rice field, not expecting personal gains or rewards. The carabao epitomizes servanthood in theological education.

The redemptive community must also be a community of love. One day Jesus was confronted by Pharisees, Sadducees, and the lawyers in the temple. They came from a wide variety of theological backgrounds and political agendas. They wanted to trap Jesus by asking difficult questions. The Sadducees quizzed Him about the outcome in heaven of the woman married with seven husbands. The Pharisees asked Him about paying taxes to Caesar. Lastly, a lawyer asked, "What is the law in a nutshell?" Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:28-31).

Theological educators are privileged to love God with their minds as they devote their lives to study, research, teaching, and publication. They will not do justice to their tenure if they are not committed to the pursuit of truth and knowledge.

The challenge has been to love God not only with our minds, but with hearts, souls, and strength. Scholarly faculty are known for their academic credentials. Should not they also be known for their acumen in warm personal relationships? Some argue that graduate education is meant to accentuate the transmission of knowledge and not feelings. Faculty is selected on the basis of their academic

[1]Donald Messer, "Multiple Models of Diaconal Ministry," in *Diaconal Ministry, Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Peyton G. Craighill (Providence, RI: North American Association for the Diaconate, 1994), 89.

scholarship, not on their pastoral propensity to love and care.

And yet, the message of a bumper sticker slogan is troubling. It says, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Students like to see demonstrations of knowledge in real lives. They are not content with receiving merely intellectual experience in the classrooms, invaluable though it may be. They want to see the gospel incarnated, even in the lives of their professors. They want to see a personal sense of mission and ministry. They want to see the depth of spiritual commitment.

Jesus' message is simple: knowing and caring are two sides of the same coin. They are integral dimensions of theological education.

Theologian Charles M. Wood suggests that "there is a place for repentance in the life of the theological school."[1] As we look forward to the third millennium, we in the seminary community need to repent of our sins for failing to be truly servants of the church.

Noted Catholic theologian Henri J. M. Nouwen suggests that if we are serious about religion, and if we are to live and act in the name of Christ, then "what I have to offer to others is not my intelligence, skill, power, influence, or connections, but my own human brokenness through which the love of God can manifest itself."[2]

Servanthood at the foot of the Cross is the basis of theological education. We cannot do otherwise.

Summary

Theological education in the third millennium is one that incorporates all members of the Body of Christ and prepares them for ministry in the church and the world. It accentuates not only information but also transformation through a deepening commitment to God as well as His Word, ministry, and mission. It is characterized by commitment to scholarship. Above all, it epitomizes the servanthood of Christ in a redemptive community living out its calling in the classrooms, offices, and school activities. It seeks to serve students and the church by loving God with all its heart, mind, and soul, and fulfilling the Great Commission of taking the gospel to the world, thus ushering in the *eschaton* and the Kingdom of God.

[1]Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 95.

[2]Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Gracias! A Latin American Journal* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 18.