Vol. 17 No. 2 May–December 2022

Mission Round Table

The OMF Journal for Reflective Practitioners



Theological Education for the Church

Discipleship for the whole people of God

MCI (P) 077/03/2022

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Printing: Yung Shung Printrade Pte Ltd

Mission Round Table is published by the Mission Research Department
OMF International (IHQ) Ltd., 2 Cluny Road, Singapore 259570

Editorial

Walter McConnell

"And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you…. Make them known to your children and your children's children …" (Deut 4:1, 9)

The first clear reference to theological education in Scripture was when Moses taught the people of Israel to obey God's laws and principles so that they could worship him rightly and bear witness to his greatness and wisdom before the nations. Those who received this direction were further instructed to teach their children and grandchildren to do likewise. Christians have continued this tradition by responding to Jesus' imperative to make disciples by teaching them to obey everything he had commanded (Matt 28:19–20) and to Paul's injunction that Timothy should pass on what he had learned so that faithful men might teach others also (2 Tim 2:2).

Though Christians often think of theological education in terms of the academy—Bible colleges and seminary programs designed to train professional ministers and scholars—the passages referred to above remind us that instruction about God and his commands cannot be limited to the specialist. Moses's explicit demand to teach children pushes education in godliness back to the earliest years, highlighting the need for serious—albeit age-relevant—theological teaching in our children's and youth Sunday school programs and camps. And as he instructs us to teach our children's children, Moses expects that those who are older are mature enough in their relationship with God that they can pass it on. Biblical discipleship never ends.

This issue of *Mission Round Table* addresses the theme of theological education within the context of East Asia to encourage us about the present scene and remind us that the whole church is needed to bring the whole counsel of God to his people. Mission is no game, but requires serious theological engagement with God's church and his world so that all might know and worship him.

The issue begins with a report on the consultation for theological educators that OMF hosted from 21–23 September 2022. The opening article—the keynote address from that consultation—sets the stage for the questions that would be discussed over the three days. This is followed by two devotionals given during the consultation. By focusing our thoughts on biblical wisdom, Paul Woods reminds us that God's teaching encompasses all of creation and requires us to draw "together Scripture, theology, and human experience and concerns" into what can be an untidy web of ideas and concepts that are necessary if we are to rightly communicate God's message to his world. Kwai Lin Stephens opens up Psalm 23 to show the need for theological education to push us beyond our focus on ourselves so that we can be transformed in our relationship with God and others.

> *The whole church is needed to bring the whole counsel of God to his people. Mission is no game, but requires serious theological engagement with God's church and his world so that all might know and worship him.*

Toward the end of the consultation, George Capaque gave a brief reflection on our discussions and deliberations in which he gave thanks for the opportunity to gather and stirred us up to ask even more questions about how we can and should do theology in both our local and global settings. George's article is followed by my attempt to collate the various ways fifty-something participants responded to the questions asked during the consultation. Comparing our examination of theological education to a medical physical, I ask "What's the diagnosis?" What are we doing well and what do we need to improve? Where do we need to cut back and where do we need restoration?

Since theological education is not merely a topic for discussion, our final papers give examples of how it can be worked out in real church and institutional settings. David Chang gives his personal account of his ministry journey to the point that Thai church leaders recognized what he could do and invited him to partner with them in leadership development and theological education. David's testimony provides an excellent model that both young and older missionaries should pay attention to. Speaking to his fellow mobilizers, Allen McClymont conveys the continuing need for theological educators in East Asia and challenges mission organizations to recruit people who can join this ministry and to identify gifted people who are already on the field who can be further developed toward this end. Clearly demonstrating that seminaries and Bible schools aren't the only place for theology to be taught, Graham Aylett, David Burke, and Iljo de Keijzer make a plea for Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programs to be multiplied as "A Tool for Contextual Equipping of all God's People." Their paper lays out a practical way for TEE to be taught as part of a seminary program to equip graduates so that they can better train their church members. Our final paper, by Allan Harkness, outlines how theological education can make an impact on the church and society as we focus on its direction and dimensions, the process by which curriculum develops, and our identification of the end results we seek.

As we listen to what God says about obeying and teaching his statutes and rules, let us also listen to others who have been doing the same and consider how their experiences can help us in our contexts.



Editor, *Mission Round Table*

Theological Education and Mission in Twenty-first Century East Asia

Walter McConnell



Walter has directed OMF International's Mission Research Department for more than nine years. He has previously served in Taiwan as a church planter and team leader, taught Old Testament and other subjects in a number of seminaries and Bible schools in Taiwan, Singapore, Ireland, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and served as pastor of the Belfast Chinese Christian Church. Walter has recently published *How Majestic is Your Name: An Introduction to Biblical Worship*.

This article is the transcription of the opening address given on 21 September 2022 at the Theological Educators' Consultation.

Welcome to our consultation for theological educators. While we are gathering to discuss a topic that is near and dear to each of our hearts, it should be clear from the very start that our interaction over the next couple of days is not intended to raise abstract considerations of the topic as a topic. Neither is it anticipated that we will merely review the way we have conceived of or practiced theological education in the past. Rather, this consultation is intended to help us forward our craft as we consider the needs that exist in our present environments and interact with practitioners from other organizations, institutes, and countries as we seek ways to collaborate so that theological education, at all of its multiple levels, will develop and the church of Christ throughout the broader region can be equipped for every good work.

Theological education in East Asia, at least in its Protestant form, can be traced to the second decade of the nineteenth century when a Hakka teenager from a small village in southern China moved to the big city of Canton (Guangzhou) and came in contact with some of Robert Morrison's assistants who invited him to join their work carving wood blocks for the publication of Chinese books. Liang Fa,[1] as he was known, soon joined Morrison's younger associate, William Milne, whom he accompanied to Malacca in 1815 to establish a publishing house for the London Missionary Society (LMS). Through daily Bible reading with Milne and his work printing Christian literature, Liang Fa came to faith in Jesus Christ and, in 1816, was baptized. Within four years, Milne was looking toward the possibility that Liang Fa might be ordained, and, in 1824, Morrison ordained him. Though his theological education did not follow today's formal methods, Liang Fa demonstrated his knowledge of the faith through preaching and in print. His pamphlet, *Quan shi liang yan*, "Good Words to Admonish the Age," contained what has been called "the most complete statement of Protestant doctrine by a Chinese during the first half of the nineteenth century."[2]

The training of the first Chinese ordained to Protestant ministry got theological education in East Asia off to a good start. And even if it did not develop as quickly as some may have wished and often displayed an interest in issues that were most pertinent in other parts of the world, it has matured greatly during the past two centuries. And as church leadership comes in many forms that have a variety of purposes, theological education has developed what we sometimes call formal, informal, and non-formal training programs. Does the church in Asia need people who have mastered the biblical languages, the history of doctrine, exegesis, and homiletics? I expect that most of us would answer with a resounding "Yes!" And schools have been established that equip leaders with these skills. Does every church leader need to reach this level of competency? I hope that you would respond just as strongly with an "Absolutely not!" And for this level of leadership, a different set of courses and training programs have been developed and continue to be developed.

Does interacting with people from different backgrounds—be they denominational, national, ethnic, or whatever—stimulate our thinking and practice so that our teaching skills and content are enhanced?

The question is, how do we determine who needs how much and what kind of training and at what point in life? Do we leave this up to the individual or the local church? Do we allow the academy—the Bible colleges and seminaries—to make this decision? How do we respond to situations in which one's call into church work seems to correspond with a failure to pass a university entrance examination since the requirements to get into a theological college can be less rigorous? Where do accrediting boards fit in? Is theological education (on any level) an end in itself or is it a servant of the church and God's mission through the church?[3] Should training take place purely within one's cultural and familial setting or can someone come away (or be sent away) for a shorter or extended period of time, and, if they do, will they ever really fit back in? How do things like character, personal godliness, spiritual gifts, and the ability to express oneself orally fit into the equation? Clearly, it is neither reasonable nor possible to devise a one-size-fits-all training program or offer an endless number of courses from which a student is free to choose according to personal tastes and interests. Do we shape the contours of a curriculum by choreographing an elaborate dance that highlights the most valuable courses? And if so, who determines which courses are the most valuable and how the dance should be choreographed? Or do the private agendas of opposing groups reduce us to a diabolical fight for academic or practical turf? The issues and potential problems here are as endless as they are critical.

How do we, as theological educators who come from different countries and work in our own country or abroad, collaborate with those from other parts of the world? Is it good enough to associate occasionally through regional or global bodies, like ATA, ICETE, Increase, and Re-Forma, that set criteria for good practices and produce materials for developing and evaluating programs and faculty?[4] Should we find more "neutral" settings in which to meet—whether face-to-face or virtually—to share ideas and methods? And if so, how frequently should we meet and how do we determine what we should discuss? Does interacting with people from different backgrounds—be they denominational, national, ethnic, or whatever—stimulate our thinking and practice so that our teaching skills and content are enhanced? Or does it cause us to shrink back due to the strangeness of what we hear? While many schools and organizations claim that the courses they teach are designed to impact the head, heart, and hands or center on knowing, being, doing, and relating so that students become well-rounded as individuals and in ministry, how can we ensure that this desire proves to be more than just important-sounding talk or wishful thinking?

The kind of questions asked here demonstrate the need for a broad discussion of theological education. Though this has been done at many times in the past, the conversation needs to continue since many of us were not present during the earlier discussions and since our circumstances have changed over the years.[5] The current context of our churches, societies, and training programs leads us to ask the first two questions of the five that we would like to discuss over the next couple of days.

1. What are the main theological/missiological priorities for the churches in your context? How can theological education on various levels address these priorities?

2. What models and delivery systems do you have for theological education? What place is there for TEE and similar programs, online courses, hybrid courses, and other digital formats for theological education in your country? What would you like to see developed in the future?

Any discussion we have about theological education needs to begin right where we are. Is the church in our context strong, weak, or strong in some areas but weak in others? Are the formal and non-formal methods we use fit for purpose? Were they developed for another place and/or time? Or are they culturally relevant but biblically, academically, practically, or otherwise lacking? What needs to be done to ensure that the tools we use are adequate for the job before us? What visions do you and/or others have for improving theological education in your context? We need to be sure we address both "grassroots" and advanced theological training and include ideas that we personally find deficient. This is crucial because it is only as we take the ideas seriously that we can evaluate them adequately and determine their value in the overall spectrum of theological education. What works and what doesn't? Why might this be so? Are we striving for a level that is too high or too low, too academic or too practical? What motivates us to do so?

It is clear that most major models for theological education used worldwide were developed in the West or by westerners working to train church leaders in other contexts. This is true of both formal and informal models. It is also true of those that promote "indigenous" or "contextualized" theology. This reality has led me for more than twenty years to regularly ask Asian theological educators what a truly Asian theological education might look like. But with all the talk about the need for contextualized Asian theology, most of those I have asked have been unable to provide any kind of an answer. No one has yet offered what I feel is a reasonable suggestion as to what this might look like. I have, in fact, been disappointed to find that Asian theologians who critique systems developed in the West use purely Western modes of reasoning to do so. I have been further disheartened to discover that suggested substitutes are often little more than variations of old Western training methods. Surely this is not good enough. And for that reason, we need to consider what the future of theological education in our part of the world should look like. There is space here for dreaming and for addressing local needs and gifts practically.

In addition to providing a venue for evaluating how we can improve our practice of theological education, we hope that this gathering will help us establish and build relationships with people who work with various institutions and organizations so that we can collaborate on multiple levels. One very practical place for this pertains to working with foreigners who would like to help us train new generations of church leaders. Please don't misunderstand "foreigner" to be a synonym for "western missionary." Though God used white missionaries to found many theological colleges and training centers throughout the region and many continue to teach at and even lead some of these institutions today, the church in East Asia has grown to the point that most theological educators serve locally. What's more, the strength of the church in some parts of Asia has led to the sending of Asian missionaries who serve in other parts of Asia and the world. Some of these have actively engaged in theological education for years. It is therefore as important for participants here to get to know believers from other parts of Asia as it is to interact with those from the West.

Any discussion we have about theological education needs to begin right where we are. Is the church in our context strong, weak, or strong in some areas but weak in others? Are the formal and non-formal methods we use fit for purpose? Were they developed for another place and/or time? Or are they culturally relevant but biblically, academically, practically, or otherwise lacking?

The presence of theological educators who come from other countries and cultures requires that we take seriously the question Duane Elmer has asked people throughout the world: "What could missionaries do to more effectively minister the gospel of Christ in your culture?"[6] This is not a question that those of us who are counted as missionaries or the organizations to which we belong can adequately answer. We need the help of local believers with whom we serve if we are to rightly see how we fit in and how well we are doing. Our hope is that during this consultation you will apply Elmer's question to different forms of theological education. As brothers and sisters in Christ who come from outside of your countries and cultures, we need you to tell us what we can do to become more effective theological educators in your cultural context. Our next two question address this issue.

3. What are the five most important things that foreigners can do to help theological education in your country? What type of ministries can they best do and what level should they work at? What kind of person is needed to do it? How can they be best prepared for this?

4. Please give us an honest appraisal of how foreign gospel workers (whether from somewhere else in Asia or another part of the world) perform in your culture. How can mission agencies better prepare missionaries to serve in your country? What kind of training would you like to see them have? What kind of school/program should they attend to receive that training?

Your answers to these questions will greatly help OMF and other mission and para-church agencies get a clearer understanding of the impact we are having and might possibly have in the future. Are we selecting the right kind of candidates? Do they come with the right level of training? Are they given adequate language, cultural, ministry, and practical training? Do we need to mobilize people who can help with one type of theological education or another? Please let us know if you have noticed that we do certain things well. Similarly, inform us about areas where we need to improve. Undoubtedly, we will come with our own ideas of how certain things should be done, just as each one of you does. And while this can be due to our cultures and upbringing, it can also be influenced by our Christian tradition, education, personality, and so much more. And even if we might not appreciate all of your feedback about our work among you, we need to hear it for the sake of Jesus Christ and his church. Only as we receive honest feedback can we act upon it and thus better fulfil the mission we believe God has given us.

And though a major motivation for holding this consultation is to evaluate how we as foreign missionaries fit into the needs and desires of the church in East Asia, the primary focus should not be on us. For this reason, the final questions that this consultation addresses will come from you. By thinking about the needs in each of your contexts, contemplating the kinds of training programs that are needed and will be needed to meet those needs, and considering how Christian workers from overseas can work together with you, you may begin to ask many more questions about theological education that no one could have anticipated before our meeting. We would thus like to give you an opportunity to formulate and ask these questions both of us—the foreign missionaries who have come to serve the church in your countries—and your fellow theological educators who serve in other countries here in East Asia.

5. What questions would you like to ask other theological educators serving in Asia about their work?

   What questions would you like to ask foreign missionaries and their agencies regarding how they might best serve theological education in East Asia?[7]

The questions that could be asked here are as broad as the horizon. Let us dare to ask both the easy and the difficult ones and, as God enables us, to work together to find solutions that will help build up church leaders throughout the region and the surrounding world. May God use our deliberations over the next couple of days and our continued labor to train faithful workers "who will," in Paul's words, "be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). **MRT**

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[1] Liang Fa (梁发/梁發) is also known as Liang A-Fa, Ah-Fa, and Leong Kung Fa. For more information, see Martha Stockment, "Liang Fa," Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity, http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/liang-fa (accessed 14 September 2022), George Hunter McNeur, *Liang A-Fa: China's First Preacher, 1789–1855* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), Baiyu Andrew Song, *Training Laborers for His Harvest: A Historical Study of William Milne's Mentorship of Liang Fa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), and Jonathan A. Seitz, "Liang Fa (Liang A-Fa): Leader in Chinese Indigenization," in *Builders of the Chinese Church: Pioneer Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Church Leaders*, ed. G. Wright Doyle (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015), 49–64.

[2] 梁發, 勸世良言 (台北市, 1965). Quote taken from Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Volume II, 1500–1900* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 291.

[3] Taking the last position, The Cape Town Commitment says, "The mission of the church is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the church." The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment* (n.p.: Didasko, 2011), 69, http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment.

[4] For links to these groups, see: Asia Theological Association, https://www.ataasia.com/; The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education, https://icete.info/; Increase Association, https://www.increaseassociation.org/partners; and Re-Forma, https://www.re-forma.global/. We could add organizations like the Evangelical Theological Society, Society of Biblical Literature, World Evangelical Alliance Mission Commission, and many others.

[5] For historical examples of conversations regarding theological education in Asia, see Bong Rin Ro, "A History of Evangelical Theological Education in Asia (ATA): 1970–1990," *Torch Theological Journal* 11, no. 1 (2008): 24–44, and the information he provides there regarding early ATA consultations and publications. For background on TEE and theological education, see Freda Carey and Patricia Harrison, "TEE in Historical Context," in *TEE for the 21st Century: Tools to Equip and Empower God's People for His Mission*, ed. David Burke, Richard Brown, and Qaiser Julius (Carlisle: Langham, 2021), 99–122.

[6] Duane Elmer, *Cross-cultural Servanthood* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 15.

[7] Note the call for building "truly global Christian networks" made by Andrew Walls in his "World Christianity, Theological Education and Scholarship," *Transformation* 28, no. 4 (2011): 236–37.

Wisdom as the Basis and Aim of Theological Education

Paul Woods



Paul Woods has previously worked with doctoral students at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies and master's students at Singapore Bible College. Before that, he served as language and culture consultant for the Fellowship as a whole in Singapore and for the Mekong Field based in Chiang Mai. He now has a new role as outward-facing Theological Educator at Large within OMF (UK).

As we come together for this theological educators' consultation, I would like us to engage with a few thoughts from Proverbs 8 and Colossians 1. Both connect to the role of wisdom and of God's people in the world. Also, both lead me to worship at the feet of Christ. Christ is king over creation and then the church. We are co-labourers in his redemption project. From Proverbs and Colossians, we can think of ourselves as Christ's colleagues in a derivative kind of way.

I want to think of wisdom as a motif in Scripture and for us in theological education. Rather than religious knowledge, wisdom is the everyday, practical application of the faith, outside the church and during the week.

The book of Proverbs urges us to gain wisdom and warns of dangers that await those who lack it. Proverbs 8 is especially beautiful and attractive to me because of its pseudo-Christological central section.

> [1] Does not wisdom call out?
> Does not understanding
> raise her voice?
> [2] At the highest point along the way,
> where the paths meet,
> she takes her stand;
> [3] beside the gate leading into the city,
> at the entrance, she cries aloud:
>
> (Prov 8:1–3, NIV)

We begin with the personification of wisdom as female. Wisdom calls out and raises her voice, confident and assertive. She appears at the city gates, where the elders sit to debate and hear court cases.

> [6] Listen, for I have trustworthy
> things to say;
> I open my lips to speak what is right.
> [7] My mouth speaks what is true,
> for my lips detest wickedness.
> [8] All the words of my mouth are just;
> none of them is crooked
> or perverse.
> [9] To the discerning all of them
> are right;
> they are upright to those who
> have found knowledge.
>
> (Prov 8:6–9)

In most cultures, the commandment to "listen" means "listen and obey." In our enlightenment-influenced world, including the western theological academy, knowledge and wisdom have become different, separated. Knowledge is commonly associated with facts, scientific or otherwise, but wisdom is about values, and is richer, deeper, more organic, inscribed in human cultures, and ultimately located within God. Wisdom contains a moral element that goes way beyond knowing "stuff" and keeps us on the right track. These few verses remind me of Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." It is about cultivating a basic moral orientation to wisdom.

> [12] "I, wisdom, dwell together
> with prudence;
> I possess knowledge and discretion.
> [13] To fear the LORD is to hate evil;
> I hate pride and arrogance, evil
> behaviour and perverse speech.
> [14] Counsel and sound judgment
> are mine;
> I have insight, I have power.
>
> (Prov 8:12–14)

Wise people show prudence and discretion. A quiet word here and there can achieve so much. For me, these verses resonate with the Ten Commandments as well as with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians.

> [17] I love those who love me,
> and those who seek me find me.
> [18] With me are riches and honour,
> enduring wealth and prosperity.
> [19] My fruit is better than fine gold;
> what I yield surpasses choice silver.
> [20] I walk in the way of righteousness,
> along the paths of justice,

[21] bestowing a rich inheritance
on those who love me
and making their treasuries full.
(Prov 8:17–21)

In verses 17–21, wisdom, prudence, and honesty help us run our lives and affairs in ways that God and people approve of and that keep us on the path of righteousness. If we had time to look at Proverbs 8 in detail, we would see that wisdom is useful and available to all.

This central section of the chapter, including verses 22–31, is one of my favourite sections of the whole Bible. It is one of those spooky pieces of text that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up as it takes you to a higher place. Wisdom teaches us to keep our feet on the ground and is intensely practical, yet the associations and implications of these central verses take us up into the heavenlies and into the ancient mind and purposes of God himself. So far, much of what we have read is very human—wisdom is a human as well as divine thing, and there is wisdom in every human culture and religion. But things shift here. This is the fresh, moist air of a beautiful spring morning not long after the creation, as this view of wisdom brings us to God's embrace.

[22] "The LORD brought me forth
as the first of his works,
before his deeds of old;
[23] I was formed long ages ago,
at the very beginning,
when the world came to be.
[24] When there were no watery
depths, I was given birth,
when there were no springs
overflowing with water;
[25] before the mountains
were settled in place,
before the hills, I was given birth,
[26] before he made the world or its fields
or any of the dust of the earth.
(Prov 8:22–26)

This central section might cause grief to some systematic theologians, because it is messy and raises more questions than it answers. Hallelujah!

Before any of the physical creation existed, wisdom was there. It predates the creation. Wisdom is required for there even to be a creation. Does wisdom have personhood? Is this just a device to help us engage with it? Is it helpful for us to conceive of wisdom as a person? Is there something deeper going on here?

[27] I was there when he set
the heavens in place,
when he marked out the horizon
on the face of the deep,
[28] when he established the clouds above
and fixed securely the fountains
of the deep,
[29] when he gave the sea its boundary
so that the waters would not
overstep his command,
and when he marked out the
foundations of the earth.
[30] Then I was constantly at his side.
I was filled with delight day after day,
rejoicing always in his presence,
[31] rejoicing in his whole world
and delighting in the human race.
(Prov 8:27–31)

Throughout these verses, wisdom is a witness to the creation. Wisdom personified manifests a wide range of human attributes, and stands side by side with the creator God himself.

The picture is of God as celestial and terrestrial architect, mandating, measuring, marking, making, all the while with wisdom at his side. Was wisdom just watching the process or somehow part of it? The details of the physical creation and the delineation of land and sea here remind me of God's final exchange with Job, when the creat*or* responds to the creat*ure*'s attempt to call him to account. God's supremacy and primacy are positive and reassuring.

In verse 30, wisdom is side by side with God and, for me, this evokes John's *the Word was with God*. And wisdom rejoices in three ways: being in the presence of God, in the whole created order, and in the human race itself.

As I have read this passage over the years, I have come to believe that there is something Christological or Trinitarian here. Is wisdom pointing to or in some way representing the Divine Son or the Holy Spirit? Is this entity, full of wisdom, with God at the beginning, and taking such joy in the creation of heaven, earth, and humankind, showing us the Godhead? In the Orthodox tradition, it is accepted that in the Proverbs, Wisdom personified points to Christ. We may not want to go as far as the great Russian theologian Sergei Bulgakov, who was criticised for making wisdom into the fourth person of the Trinity, but these verses do at least make connections to Christ or hint at him. I like the rather old-fashioned English word *adumbrate*. Perhaps God is making us think and is breaking some of the neat boxes of the western academy.

Wisdom is not just a resource; she is a creative, moral entity for whom humanity is a source of joy. Wisdom rejoices at what God has done, the whole of his created order. There is so much of delight and joy here as wisdom contemplates the greatness of God and what he had made. Wisdom must be part of our lives, helping us as she engages with us and delights in us; it is deeply relational.

[32] "Now then, my children, listen to me;
blessed are those who keep my ways.
[33] Listen to my instruction and be wise;
do not disregard it.
[34] Blessed are those who listen to me,
watching daily at my doors,
waiting at my doorway.
[35] For those who find me find life
and receive favour from the LORD.
[36] But those who fail to find
me harm themselves;
all who hate me love death."
(Prov 8:32–36)

In the light of all that has been said, listen to wisdom and keep to her ways. Look at the words here: *listen, blessed, instruction, watching*. These lead to life and the Lord's favour. Wisdom is God's character written down; dare I say it, his Word—in both senses—written down.

And now, we transition to the Christ hymn of Colossians 1. I sometimes think of this passage as John chapter 1 for Jews. But while John uses the Greek concept of the *logos* in exploring Jesus' divine nature and role in the universe, Paul draws on Old Testament themes and links them to the church. We don't have time to explore overlaps between John's Greek *logos* and Jewish ideas on wisdom from Proverbs 8 and the supremacy of Jesus in Colossians. Do that when you get home!

It is striking that Christ's supremacy over the created world is presented before his pre-eminence over the church.

> The Son is the image of the
> invisible God, the firstborn
> over all creation. (Col 1:15)

Paul's way of writing makes you sit up straight in your chair. His "*the Son is the image of the invisible God*" is a bold statement about Christ that feeds into our understanding of God as Trinity. The firstborn refers to Christ's unique status as Son and heir to all things, given

to him by his victory on the cross and his work in creating. Already, I can sense a pull back into Proverbs 8.

The scope of *all creation* is vast! This is important as there are Christians who follow a kind of dualism that puts the things of faith and the things of the rest of life into separate silos. Some do not know how to engage the world with the Bible and default to simple evangelism. When churches do not grasp the broader and richer message of the Scriptures, in their enthusiasm for Christ they risk making him small.

A different kind of problem is associated with a more liberal position. Here, a cosmic Christ works somehow for justice in society and really cares for small furry animals, but doesn't have any transformational application to our day-to-day lives.

The reality of Jesus and the genius of Paul's portrayal of him here is that the risen Christ is the firstborn, with authority and sovereignty over *all* things. He combines transcendence and immanence, ruling over the *out there* and the *in here*. He is neither the Christ of the world-fearing and world-rejecting Christian, nor the Jesus of the liberal, world-subservient Christian.

> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:16)

All of what you perceive, even in the spiritual shadows and the half-light where waking and sleeping come together, were made by Christ. What we might separate as earthly and heavenly, or visible and invisible, are an integrated whole for Jesus, because he made all things. As regards our physical world and its ecological system, including animals and plants, our status as God's image bearers brings awesome responsibility! And Jesus' authority over the creation is not a form of deism, in which the creator makes the wristwatch, winds it up, and then walks off. No, all that we see and understand, from our own experience and the discoveries of science and human wisdom, exists for him and he is committed to it.

The *for him* is more incredible than the *through him*. The whole created order is established to serve and glorify Christ according to his purposes. There can be no other orientation for the universe. As Revelation 22 tells us, Christ is the *alpha* and *omega*, the bookends of all human history and endeavour.

> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Col 1:17)

In some way that I do not understand, this whole created order is sustained by Christ—as Hebrews 1:3 also tells us. How can we understand this? When human wisdom reaches its limit, cognition gives way to surrender, which is so liberating. The physical universe, the laws of science, and the living organisms of people and animals are somehow integrated by Christ. This is what he does!

> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Col 1:18)

Only after presenting Christ as master of the universe—the *Pantocrator*—does Paul turn to the church. The king of the world is also the king of the church; it couldn't really be any other way, could it?

If our understanding and presentation of Christ are as provider of individual salvation only, we are doing a disservice to him, his people, and those outside the church.

> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, (Col 1:19)

Verse 19 begins with *for* and connects back to the previous verse. Christ is supreme in everything not only because of his divine nature or role as creator, but also because the fullness of the Godhead was infused into him at the incarnation. The one in charge of the creation and the church is both human and divine; what an affirmation of created humanity! We are called to great things in Christ

> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1:20)

And true greatness spills over into mercy. This transcendent and immanent Christ is supreme over the universe and the church. But rather than crush our sinful nature, the royal procession that marches through the universe rescues and transforms it. Colossians is not just about the power of Christ, but also about his love. *All things* are reconciled to the love and justice of Christ.

We have good news, and Christ's dual headship over world and church conveys to us the responsibility and resources to engage for him. Scripture indicates the vital role the church should have in helping Jesus judge, redeem, and administer his planet and the civilisations it sustains.

The history of the church has shown how easy it is to fall into either of two extremes. Oppose the world, hide away, and then complain when we are irrelevant. Or, push God away *out there* and make him an ineffectual, white-bearded old man who doesn't really make any difference. Jesus, Paul, and whole of Scripture command us to walk the middle way, combining the *out there* and the *in here*, ongoing personal transformation and critical engagement with the world around us.

There can be no ongoing creation and restoration in the kingdom sense without wisdom. Wisdom is more than knowledge; it is the application of knowledge gained from Scripture and the Lord, refined through testing and human experience, rooted in community, and directed for good. The OT passage gives us the mandate as followers of the God who created wisdom and created with wisdom. The NT passage continues the theme of God's sovereignty and the vital role of the community of faith.

Biblical and theological knowledge are not enough, but they are a precious and vital foundation. We need to build on these and go out into the world. Think of these Scriptures and the task of theologising itself as a worldwide web of related ideas and concepts. Or perhaps a group of ideas joined by Wittgensteinian family resemblances. How do we understand wisdom and how do we work out Christ's supremacy of the creation and the church? We need a theological method that draws together Scripture, theology, and human experience and concerns. This is not neat and tidy, but God's wisdom, heart, and love require us to minister into complex situations and equip God's people to communicate with and help a needy world.

This is why we are passionate about theological education! **MRT**

Psalm 23: A Deepening Relationship

Kwai Lin Stephens



Kwai Lin and her husband Bill have served in Mongolia since 1993. They worked for the Ministry of Education to train English teachers and then taught full-time at Union Bible Theological College (UBTC). Kwai Lin later became the principal of UBTC and taught a wide range of courses in Bible, mission, Christian leadership, spiritual formation, and mentoring. From 2008 to 2018, Kwai Lin served as Executive Director of Joint Christian Services International, an intra-mission relief and development organization working in the areas of agriculture, alcohol abuse reduction, community development, education, environmental care, medicine, small business development, and sports. She currently serves as an Organizational Leadership Consultant and Integral Mission Trainer.

Introduction

Psalm 23 is a familiar psalm. This was a song of David's personal reflection and transformational experience with the LORD—Yahweh. The structure of this psalm allows it to be divided into four sections that reflect the deepening level of relationships shared by David and Yahweh.

I can identify with David's experience that our relationship with Yahweh goes through layers of transformation. These layers of transformation are reflected in the structure of the psalm in the form of musical movements, in which one section progresses to the next, until a crescendo is reached in verse 6.

Section 1: The "I and My" relationship

"The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not be in want." (1)

Clearly, the focus is the individual "I" and "my" experience; it is not "we" or "ours." David, the psalmist, has a personal, individual relationship with the LORD—Yahweh. The trust David experiences comes through his physical needs being met. David knows of God's physical and material provision. This is a knowledge of God set at the physical level.

Similarly, our relationship with Yahweh is often based on "I" and "my" needs being met. Our experience is concretely in God's material and timely provision. Yet, this can be superficial and seriously lack internal transformation.

Section 2: The "He and I" relationship

"He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (2–3)

In this section, David begins by focusing on Yahweh as "He." David sang of God's provision of nourishment. God is like a gentle giant guiding and providing by the riverbank. David drinks deep in those quiet and still moments. He knows that this nourishment is needed to walk in God's paths of righteousness.

David refers to Yahweh as "he." The dialogue between him and God is that of "he and I." He is the Shepherd; I am the sheep. The sheep experiences Yahweh as a third person, with a sense of formality, guided by formulated theological discourse, something that theological educators talk about. However, even with this relationship, there can still be a serious lack of intimacy.

We have all experienced this tranquil, polite, and formal relationship with the Lord, our Good Shepherd. As theologians and theological educators, we are very familiar with "talking about



God" while we continue to struggle with intimacy with God. Despite the green pasture and quiet waters, our transformation is not deep. Our knowledge of Yahweh is something we talk about but not something we deeply desire to pursue. We do not live a life that flows out of roots that are deeply grounded in the Living Water, especially in crisis moments.

Section 3: The "You and I" relationship

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows." (4–5)



Bill and Kwai Lin visiting Tsend in Western Mongolia

While walking in "paths of righteousness for his name's sake," the musician encounters something that activates a huge transition. He experiences darkness and the shadow of death. This is when he suddenly changes his pronoun as he clings to Yahweh as "You." Moving from the third person to the second person, the psalmist leaves "talking about God" behind as he enters a face-to-face direct communication in which he is "talking with God."

Our relationship with God grows deeper as we walk through dark valleys and encounter the presence of evil. Through crisis and things that cause us to become disheartened, we realize that within the shadow there is light; we experience that when faced by death there is life.

Here, David knows that the Good Shepherd is also the True Shepherd.

We, like David, desperately need to experience that God often humbles and tests us. In the midst of humiliation, fear, war, and vulnerability, Yahweh is ready to come and quench our thirst. Yahweh provides nourishment in the wilderness, deeply satisfies our longing, and whispers his language of love in our ears. The valleys in life provide the times that best transform us.

In ministry, we can experience profound loneliness, isolation, heartbreak, disappointment, exhaustion, and even betrayal. These can lead to severe spiritual malnutrition in the midst of fulfilling God's call. Yet, it is here and now that the doors of opportunity and radical generosity of God's grace perfect our weaknesses. As David declared, "My cup overflows!"

Section 4. The "I and Yours forever"

"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (6)

In the last verse, we see a transformed "I." David's delight is no longer that "I shall lack nothing." Rather, his delight is that he will "dwell in the house of the LORD forever." The focus on materiality and temporality shifts to what is eternal—the "holy presence" of Yahweh.

The transformed "I" has embraced all of human pain, suffering, and ugliness that can be experienced in the now and is yet able to hope for the future. It is a miraculous and a daunting task that we walk, work, and live in this miserable world while we wait for the return of the Great Shepherd.

A story from Mongolia: From suffering to rejoicing

In 2003, we led Tsend (not his real name) to Christ. He was the first Hoton (Mongolian Uyghur) believer in a remote county. The little town he lives in is a 1400-kilometer drive from the capital and often took three to four days of travel over dirt roads to get there. After receiving the Lord, Tsend read the Bible we gave him, and in a week, on his own accord, memorized the Lord's Prayer! Since then, he regularly used it for his own prayer. For nearly two decades, he was isolated with little Christian fellowship, but the Bible has been his constant companion. When his adult child, who had disabilities, died a few years ago, he was heartbroken. His other son, while still young, committed suicide! Back in 2017, when we last visited him, Tsend bitterly cried out, "I cannot pray! It is too hard to pray!" Sitting there in silence, I did something that many would consider "culturally inappropriate"! Like a mother, I took his hand in my own and invited him to pray after me, sentence by sentence. He finally broke down and cried.

This summer, we again drove to where he herds his livestock. He was so glad to see us and proudly showed us his medal for having climbed the tallest peak in Mongolia. His daughter and two grandchildren are going to church! He was so joyful to see us. Surely, as Psalm 125:2 says, "*The LORD surrounds his people both now and forever!*"

Conclusion

The role of theological educators and the impact of theological education need to be more focused on transformation, helping both ourselves and others to journey deeper in our spiritual formation. We need to find ways to create safe spaces and show hospitality that invites conversations that ensure cultures will be shaped in ways that do not result in superficial and anemic spirituality! To do so, we need the passion of a missionary, the heart of a shepherd, and the skill of a mentor-teacher. **MRT**

Reflections on the Theological Educators' Consultation

George Capaque



Dr. George Capaque is Adjunct Faculty in Theology at Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines. He formerly served as Dean of Discipleship Training Centre in Singapore.

During the two days that we gathered together, we considered questions that were intended to help us "forward our craft … consider[ing] the needs that exist in our present environments, … interact[ing] with practitioners from other organizations, institutes and other countries, … [and] seek[ing] ways to collaborate so that theological education, in all its multiple levels, will develop and the church of Christ throughout the broader region can be equipped for very good work."[1]

My reflections on our discussions will be in the form of asking more questions and, at the same time, offering more points for reflection.

1. I praise God for this opportunity to gather (despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic) and converse with each other face to face regarding how we can best practice theological education in East Asia. We also thank OMF International for initiating and sponsoring this consultation.

2. "Collaboration" and "partnerships" among academies, mission agencies, and churches are crucial concepts that were constantly mentioned in this consultation. The involvement of mission agencies, such as OMF, help us, as theological educators, to keep theology properly focused on *God and the mission of God*. In the book of Acts, theology developed as the church crossed cultural boundaries in participation with the mission of God. Theology is contextual.[2] It also comes with a missional orientation.

3. What, then, is theology? Is it content (doctrinal orthodoxy), a finished product, a process, or something on the way? Theology is engaging our cultural contexts and historical realities with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. More than content or a finished product, theology is a process as we continue to engage our contexts. It is on the way. We thus need to be continually "doing" theology.

4. Why are collaboration and partnerships crucial to theological education? Doing theology is a collaborative enterprise. While it is contextual, it is also global. The gospel, though understood and proclaimed in multiple cultural thought forms, is a universal message. Thus, we need to regularly converse/interact/network with others as we face new challenges and changing situations both locally and globally. We are grateful then to OMF for providing this venue.

5. Important questions that we have asked and need to be continually asking are: Whose agenda are we pursuing? Is it the academe's, the churches', or the missionaries'/mission agencies'? Who determines the curriculum? Where do we do theological education? In the classroom or on the field? Do we gather people together to come to our seminaries/Bible colleges or do we go where they are? What platform should we use? Online, onsite, hybrid, or what? How do we integrate technology and new media with traditional methods?

   Do we focus only in graduate and advanced (tertiary) theological education? What about grassroots theological education? How do we meet the theological and practical needs of emerging organic churches when most of their leaders have not completed formal theological education?

6. What kind of faculty, or, in the case of mission agencies, what kind of missionaries do we need? Over the past two days, we have heard that we need those who have cross-cultural training or experience, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability. We need learners, not just teachers; listeners more than those who merely provide answers. We need people who can provide a safe and hospitable space for others to express themselves, to differ, and to ask questions.

How do we help Christians in general and leaders in particular to think biblically, to develop critical thinking, or what I prefer to call, reflective practitioners?

7. How do we develop theologies that are attuned to our Asian cultural value orientations? That is, how do we do theology that is more holistic than dichotomistic, more relational or personally oriented than task-oriented, more communal than individualistic?[3] How do we produce more stories than statements or propositions? What will theologies that are practical and life-transforming look like in our context(s)? With the advent of the internet and virtual learning, how can we ensure that personal formation takes place? These are challenges that we all must face.[4]

How can we make use of our own cultural resources, such as language or cultural thought forms, in our theological education? Language is culture, we say. Should we use the vernacular in doing theology? More than one of us have stated that if we serve in Asia, we must be trained in Asia.

8. Speaking to foreign missionaries: How much are you aware of your own culture and history, including your own nation's role in colonization? Do you make the effort to understand the history and culture of the people you're working with? Are you mindful that your funds may create economic power that can produce inequality in power?

9. Where do we go from here? For one, we can continue this conversation. We can create a network of select representatives from among us that can continue the conversation and plan for the next steps. We should also network with accrediting bodies, such as ATA, ICETE, Increase, Re-Forma, and others, especially in the areas of integrating new technology and virtual learning. We should also ensure that Asian theological educators and missionaries are in the forefront of this effort. Perhaps OMF could add value to theological institutions training Asians to serve in the Asian contexts, especially in the graduate and post-graduate levels, by, among other things, sourcing qualified faculty and seconding them to these institutions. Maybe even help raise scholarship funds to support qualified students. Ultimately, we must keep listening to the Spirit's movement amongst us and as one of us shared, "trust in the slow work of God." **MRT**

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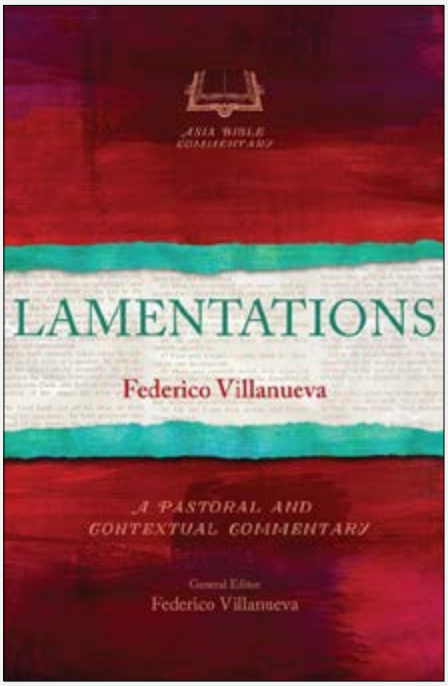
[1] See Walter McConnell's article "Theological Education and Mission in Twenty-first Century East Asia" in this issue of *Mission Round Table*, 4.

[2] Stephen Bevans argues that "there is no such thing as 'theology'; there is only *contextual theology*" (italics original). Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, revised and expanded (Manila: Logos, 2002), 3.

[3] Lingenfelter and Mayers list twelve patterns of behavior grouped into six pairs of polarities in their value-orientation approach. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986). The list is reproduced in Bernard Adeney, *Strange Virtues* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), 116.

[4] Writing in 2011, regarding his assessment of the state of theological education in North America, Frederich Schmidt concluded that "as many new creative approaches to education as there might be, a residential model of focused, face-to-face education and formation in the faith is the best means of preparing a generation of thoughtful, faithful servants of the gospel." Frederich Schmidt, "Is It the Time to Write the Eulogy?: The Future of Seminary Education," *Patheos*, 21 March 2011, https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/03/is-it-time-to-write-the-eulogy-frederick-schmidt-03-21-2011 (accessed 8 November 2022).



Lamentations: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary

Federico Villanueva. Carlisle: Langham, 2016.
ISBN 978-1-78368-191-4. 113 pp.

Reviewed by Martin Paterson

Delving deeply into the raw emotions and awful situations faced by the people of God in Jerusalem during the exile may not be the most popular source of ideas for teaching or preaching. Even so, it may prove to be one of the greatest means of presenting Christ to a hurting world. Villanueva's stand-out contribution in this commentary is the way he faithfully handles the text while also reading it in light of the tragic circumstances of typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines.

This short book follows a simple structure. There is a helpful introduction to the work, laying out details regarding the style of lament literature, such as the use of different voices. Following on, each chapter of Lamentations receives exegetical comment, guiding the reader along the process of learning to lament tragedy and the impact of sin. Villanueva is to be commended for his clear and careful handling of the text. He highlights the ongoing nature of lament and how the movement from isolation to community is part of the healing process. He also provides clear parameters about the goal of lament—"the lament that is acceptable to God flows from an honest heart that longs to be restored to God" (70).

No matter what our context, people are hurting under the abuse or injustices that have crossed the paths of their lives. People are similarly hurting as a result of the sin that they pursue and the brokenness of creation. Now may be the time for Bible teachers and cross-cultural workers to hear, embrace, and communicate the message of Lamentations. This commentary is a commendable guide toward that end.

What's the Diagnosis?

A Physical Exam for Theological Education in East Asia

Walter McConnell



Walter has directed OMF International's Mission Research Department for more than nine years. He has previously served in Taiwan as a church planter and team leader, taught Old Testament and other subjects in a number of seminaries and Bible schools in Taiwan, Singapore, Ireland, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and served as pastor of the Belfast Chinese Christian Church. Walter has recently published *How Majestic is Your Name: An Introduction to Biblical Worship*.

Many of us visit a doctor every year or so to get a check-up on our physical and perhaps mental well-being. During these visits, the doctor may remind us that we need to cut down on certain foods, put away our bad habits, and/or do more physical exercise. The prospect of a health check can cause many to experience stress and guilt. Even so, these examinations are a positive means of evaluating just how well we are taking care of the bodies that God gave us.

The need for evaluation isn't just for people. Organizations need to be examined to ensure that they are fit for purpose and thus able to fulfil their mission. And though there is no standardized checklist for assessing whether a mission organization is fit and healthy or whether it needs to beef up in one regard or trim down in another, evaluation is still essential to know if they are accomplishing God's mission as revealed in Scripture and the more simplified task outlined in their mission statements. A well-fashioned evaluation will make clear what the organization is doing well and what it isn't. And since a mission performs a wide variety of tasks, the evaluation should focus on many different issues.

For nearly ten years, OMF International's mission statement has proclaimed that "We share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness with East Asia's peoples to the glory of God." If we want to evaluate how the organization is doing, we should examine this statement from several points of view. Do we share the good news of Jesus Christ or not? Can we articulate what the good news of Jesus Christ is? Can we share it in a way that it makes sense to the people we work with? Is our sharing of the good news equivalent to the Apostle Paul's claim in Acts 20:27 that he shared the "whole counsel of God" while he was in Ephesus or does it mean something else and, if so, what? Does an emphasis on "all its fullness" give us room to take part in *mission* without explicitly articulating that Christ is Lord and Savior of all or demonstrating what that means for daily life in his world? There is a lot here that could be placed under close scrutiny.

Now, clearly when OMF says that we share the good news of Jesus Christ with East Asia's peoples, we don't mean literally *all* of East Asia's people. There are too many of them and too few of us for this to be a reality. Currently, our focus is limited to about 123 East Asian peoples with a population of about 637 million, the majority of whom do not know Jesus Christ. Though this is a small fraction of East Asia, it is still a sizeable number of people. Are we doing a good job in our sharing of Jesus with them or not? What are we doing well? What needs more work?

Self-evaluation should not only focus on the large issues. We should also zoom in to see just how successful our church planting programs are and whether or not our outreach ministries to students and through business, medical, and other means are bearing fruit. We similarly need to reflect on how well our service to the church in East Asia through local congregations and theological education is going. And though all of these ministries and more should be evaluated, this paper will only look at our work in theological education. Just how healthy is our educational work through theological colleges, local churches, and in other more informal settings?

To do this examination, we need to identify members engaged in different types of theological education—on whatever level and whether full-time or part-time—and ask how fruitful their work is. We similarly need to question whether the schools and other organizations we partner with are the right places for us to do ministry. Should we stop working with some or start working with others? We similarly need to consider how our members who serve in different countries can work together and with others in a network of theological educators. We further

The main goal for this consultation is to identify the key needs for theological education in the region. This includes all levels of theological education from "grassroots" training to undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate biblical/theological education. Only after the needs are clarified can we address ways in which they can be met, including identifying the kind of people needed to teach at each level, ensuring they have the necessary qualifications, and placing them in strategic positions of service.

need to assess how best to mobilize or otherwise develop new workers who can serve the church through teaching Bible, theology, mission, and other subjects at various levels.

Like a physical exam, such things do not happen automatically. They need to be deliberately planned, scheduled, and carried out. And like a physical, it can take a long time from the initial planning until the examination actually happens. While OMF has considered its role in theological education in East Asia on a number of occasions over the years,[1] a new conversation developed in mid-2019 when we held our last mission research consultation. At that time, we discussed hosting a consultation on theological education toward the end of 2020. But then, COVID-19 got in the way and the consultation was postponed until September 2022. Our original thinking led to the following considerations.

> Overall Purpose: To cultivate a strategic network of theological educators in Southeast Asia—from within OMF and also significant partners (both in the national church/institutes as well as our partner agencies, e.g. IEM, Avante, ProVision, etc.)—to accomplish the following:
>
> 1. Identify the key themes needed in the region. Learn about what is needed from the national leaders so that our theological education can be strategic.
>
> 2. Work through the placements of theological educators. For example, if a placement does not work out in one location due to a visa problem, a placement could be found elsewhere.
>
> 3. Create a pool of non-residential educators for modular teaching where the acquisition of visas is difficult.
>
> 4. Cultivate relationships and reconnect with theological institutes throughout the region.
>
> 5. Establish which qualifications are needed, not just academically, but also experientially.
>
> 6. Provide resources and help institutes in the region.

These initial ideas got us off to a good start as we probed some of the key issues involved and considered the way forward. As the lockdowns brought on by COVID-19 began to lift, we were able to make more concrete plans for a consultation with revised goals, more direction on who should be invited, and questions we wanted our participants to consider. We recognized up front that OMF—as an international mission agency that sends foreigners to work in a number of different countries—can bring people together to ask questions, but has no right to direct the conversation regarding theological education in Asia or the way it should be done. However, as we have helped found a number of theological colleges in the past and still provide lecturers for a number of institutions, we keenly desire to know whether and how our present efforts impact theological education and what part we might play in educating East Asian Christians in the future. For that reason, we aimed, as much as possible, to keep our ears open and our mouths closed during the conversation to learn what we can from our Asian brothers and sisters in Christ.

We decided to invite around thirty OMF members and thirty guests who are involved with theological education in East Asia to discuss the topic from 21–23 September 2022. The number was formulated, to a great degree, in accordance with the space available at the OMF International Center in Singapore. In the end, about fifty-six attended: twenty-two OMF members and thirty-four guests. The invitation letter for the consultation stated:

> The main goal for this consultation is to *identify the key needs for theological education in the region*. This includes all levels of theological education from "grassroots" training to undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate biblical/theological education. Only after the needs are clarified can we address ways in which they can be met, including identifying the kind of people needed to teach at each level, ensuring they have the necessary qualifications, and placing them in strategic positions of service. In addition to benefitting the church in East Asia, we believe this discussion will help OMF and similar organizations that seek to mobilize and send foreign workers to teach in these settings.

To help participants prepare, we provided a series of questions that focus on various aspects of theological education. Each of these questions were taken up during different sessions of the consultation.

1. What are the main theological/missiological priorities for the churches in your context? How can theological education on various levels address these priorities?

2. What models and delivery systems do you have for theological education? What place is there for TEE and similar programs, online courses, hybrid courses, and other digital formats for theological education in your country? What would you like to see developed in the future?

3. What are the five most important things that foreigners can do to help theological education in your country? What type of ministries can they best do and what level

should they work at? What kind of person is needed to do it? How can they be best prepared for this?

4. Please give us an honest appraisal of how foreign gospel workers (whether from somewhere else in Asia or another part of the world) perform in your culture. How can mission agencies better prepare missionaries to serve in your country? What kind of training would you like to see them have? What kind of school/program should they attend to receive that training?

5. What questions would you like to ask other theological educators serving in Asia about their work? What questions would you like to ask foreign missionaries and their agencies regarding our place in theological education in East Asia?

Table Groups

Table 1: Cambodia, India, and Myanmar
Table 2: China and Hong Kong
Table 3: Indonesia
Table 4: Japan and Mongolia
Table 5: Malaysia
Table 6: Philippines
Table 7: Singapore
Table 8: Thailand

The questions were formulated to be open-ended and to focus on the particular needs of various parts of East Asia. They were also designed to help us all "reflect on the current state of theological education in the region and discuss how we, as the global church, can work together to meet those needs so that national and local churches can be adequately equipped for ministry to Christians and the unchurched." And though some participants asked why it was that foreigners had instigated the consultation and formulated the questions, the fact that the consultation spanned East Asia meant that whoever called the meeting would inevitably be a foreigner from the perspective of most participants. It was also recognized that OMF's lead as an international and interdenominational mission agency made some things easier as there was no national or denominational position that could potentially put off others and it was not located at a specific theological college that could make others feel uncomfortable.

We expected, and were later proven correct, that since theological education has developed in different ways in various countries, different settings would produce different answers to the questions. For this reason, many of our initial discussions were held in country or regional groups with reports being given to the full assembly.[2] Positively, this helped participants focus on their immediate needs before interacting on the broader situation and needs in the region. As the discussions began, we discovered that a few regions were represented by too many foreigner missionaries and too few locals. This, of course, impacts the answers that are given, though it is hoped that the foreigners taking part did their best to speak for the local church.

The following sections will consider the answers given by the various groups to the questions raised at the consultation. It should be appreciated that even though not every group responded to every question, each set of questions produced about seven to eight pages of notes that have been collated here. While I have kept my comments to a minimum, the following responses require deep reflection and serious action.

1. What are the main theological/missiological priorities for the churches in your context? How can theological education on various levels address these priorities?

Leaders from multiple countries noted the need for theological education to adequately answer questions that are faced in their local settings—particularly by younger people today—rather than simply replicating traditional courses and educational patterns. They similarly recognized that the process commonly known as contextualization is feared by many conservative church leaders who reject it as being "liberal" or "heretical." It is therefore difficult to address directly and move forward on. Even so, national and regional issues, the existence and influence of other major religions or lack thereof, along with pedagogical considerations should guide a right practice and reformulation of theological training. Some felt that the existence of a "global youth culture" should influence the questions that should be asked and, thus, the answers derived.[3]

Some felt frustrated by the importance placed on learning English in many circles since so many resources are available in the language. This results in many church leaders being sent overseas to study who may not be able to readjust to "home" when (and if) they return. It is also feared that it may influence their adoption of foreign-developed training programs that may not adequately prepare workers for their own church setting.

Many agreed that churches in East Asian countries need to know what it means to be an authentic Christian in a society dominated by other religions or none. Whether Christians live as members of a minority religion, in a pluralist setting that rejects absolute truth, in a Christian culture where liberal or folk religion retains the name of Christian while rejecting or ignoring the core, biblical tenets of the faith, or where Christian thinking and practice is grossly impacted by a secular-sacred divide, they need to be taught how to respond to their cultures. In such contexts, how can the church and the academy work together to address real issues—e.g., divorce, LGBT+, filial piety, ancestral veneration, authority, etc.—for the benefit of the church and

Some participants echoed a much wider recognition that while the internet contains much that is good, the opposite is also true. The nature of the material often makes it difficult for pastors to distinguish between biblical teaching and heresy. If this is so, how can the average church member be expected to know what to accept and what to reject?

the rest of society? Can seminaries lead the way in providing critical thinking regarding the major issues faced in politics, ethics, truth, and justice?[4] Can we teach people how to find truth for themselves rather than simply being told what is right, to distinguish between what is beneficial and what isn't? How can churches and academic institutions do a better job working together rather than competing against each other?

Some participants echoed a much wider recognition that while the internet contains much that is good, the opposite is also true. The nature of the material often makes it difficult for pastors to distinguish between biblical teaching and heresy. If this is so, how can the average church member be expected to know what to accept and what to reject? When church members regularly interact with false teaching on social media and other online resources, how can we prevent sound theology being silenced or negated? How can the church be salt and light in society and not be turned by lies and propaganda promoted by popular politicians and the media? How do we train people to reject the evil and cling to that which is good?

Several groups articulated the need to have "spiritual leadership that demonstrates maturity and unity in the church." This can be seen if their prime focus is on God's kingdom and they prove their ability to share and pass on leadership to a younger generation. Church leaders need to help all believers sink deep spiritual roots into Christ and be discipled so that theology is closely integrated with life. Suggestions for how this might be accomplished include the utilization of sports ministries, creative arts, music, and drama. While some settings, like Mongolia, mentioned the need for youth to be evangelized and discipled, in many parts of Asia the same is needed for older people. Disciple-making activities, from theological colleges on down, should not be limited to programs and activities but should center on following Jesus and obeying his commands.

Younger churches know the positives and negatives of having foreign missionaries set the model for how church should be done, whether it be the format of a service, dress code for ministers, leadership style, or other things. The missionaries' impact on the church is multiplied if they control finances. As one participant noted, "Money brought from outside the local churches leads to believers moving from church to church. This is not healthy for faith." Even so, one group felt that missionaries could benefit the church by funding projects and missions. The major issue is who controls the purse. Missionaries need to learn to work with local church leaders. Missionaries also need to honor, empower, and encourage the local leaders to speak up about issues they believe are important and lead in locally appropriate ways. They also need to learn how to release control of finances into local hands. Foreign missionaries need to develop cross-cultural skills and have an ecclesiology that is robust enough to recognize that different cultures can express their faith in somewhat different ways. All educators need practical ministry experience and the ability to contextualize.

Prejudice runs high, even in the church. How can we help Christians develop a heart for minorities? How can we address racism in the local congregation and amend our attitudes and actions so we better reflect the grace that God has extended to us?

As in much of the world, COVID-19 impacted East Asian church life in both negative and positive ways that raise questions for theological reflection. As one leader rightly said: "COVID didn't create the problem, but it exposed the problem that was there." One of the major problems brought to light concerns what, exactly, is the church? How should it be done? How can we ensure that our meetings aren't devised as a passive experience but allow people to participate rather than be entertained? How can we ensure that it centers on listening to and obeying God's word? The return to more normal—though often hybrid—services has made it clear that some people prefer to remain at home rather than join a larger group. This may indicate that bonds between church members don't go very deep. How then, can we facilitate the need (and biblical demand) for fellowship? Is it possible to practice spiritual gifts in isolation?

Several groups noted the rise in foreign mission *from* Asian contexts and raised the need for training in crosscultural ministry skills. This includes those who aim to take the gospel overseas and those who reach out to foreigners in their own country. Some groups felt that engagement in mission is the major priority at the present time. Even so, the fact that more parachurch organizations promote mission than local churches results in many local congregations lacking a sense of responsibility for mission. The need for churches to be trained to understand and fulfil the Great Commission and Great Commandment and to "integrate mission with good work and godliness" was likewise recognized.

Those who discussed outreach to foreigners acknowledged that majority





people often generalize about minorities and may consider them to be uncivilized, even violent people. The actions of a few frequently stain the perception of the whole. Prejudice runs high, even in the church. How can we help Christians develop a heart for minorities? How can we address racism in the local congregation and amend our attitudes and actions so we better reflect the grace that God has extended to us? In addition to direct teaching, seminaries and local churches could organize mission trips designed to *serve and engage* others in a way that puts members out of their comfort zones and helps them develop proper attitudes toward those who are other.

As churches in East Asia interact with global Christianity, important books need to be translated into multiple languages. At the same time, books written by East Asian Christians should be translated into English and other languages to facilitate worldwide interaction and collaboration.

For theological education to move forward throughout the region, the major questions faced by the church need to be addressed. Some of the ones listed here will be more applicable in some contexts than others. And while different countries have different needs, it is also true that needs vary within some countries. Theological thinking and teaching—at all levels—must therefore keep specific contexts in view.

2. What models and delivery systems do you have for theological education? What place is there for TEE and similar programs, online courses, hybrid courses, and other digital formats for theological education in your country? What would you like to see developed in the future?

Throughout East Asia, whether the church is well-established or relatively new, multiple models of theological education are known and in use. Though not practiced everywhere, these include "traditional" residential colleges with lectures, extension programs where lecturers are sent to churches, hybrid instruction "with video and other digital formats," church-based training, online courses, TEE programs, intensive courses, and more. In this section, we will look at some responses to the currently used models and some hopes for the future.

Several participants noted that the COVID-19 lockdown forced residential programs to close down and online training was the only way to continue. With the experiment came the realization that online programs are, in many ways, far inferior to residential programs. Part of this is connected to infrastructure. This was well articulated by one participant who noted that, "being in a rural situation with poor internet access and no library resources" made it difficult for students, while "not being able to check to see if students are focused" made it difficult for teachers.[5] He concluded that "We learn best when we are together—discussing." Another participant noted that, without face-to-face interaction, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to "gauge personal transformation and growth in skills."[6]

While educators recognized that online and hybrid education is "absolutely needed" today, they insist that something needs to be done so that online students don't get sidelined. Part of the problem is the lack of physical presence and interaction with other students and lecturers. Several pointed out that since people are communal, attending a purely online course makes developing relationships extremely difficult. As one stated, the "problem is application and true transformation, so there needs to be more one-to-one life impact," something that can only be done through direct "mentoring and/or coaching." Another explained that, "The informal, unscripted time is most beneficial" in the development of community. Yet another noted that whether or not "online is great for knowledge," it is "very anemic on character and spiritual formation" as it contains "no life-on-life discipleship."

This raises a grave concern regarding the spiritual formation of pastors—many of whom are first-generation believers. If the best time for interaction with teachers is in person outside of class or during meal times, what hope do online students have to develop in this way? Is it possible to devise a hybrid program that requires a certain amount of face-to-face time? What would it look like? Would students buy into the idea? It may be possible for a teacher or mentor pastor to arrange for a Zoom call, but after three years of Zoom, many teachers and students feel "Zoomed out". The need for online lectures to be mated with personal interaction between students and between students and lecturers, though widely recognized, remains an unsolved problem. How can we bring online technology and our need to spend

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time together into the same orbit so that it enhances ministry formation? How do we "design our education to have a right balance between knowing, doing, and being"? And how do we move from virtual lessons to live ministry?

The change to online and hybrid methods impacts both students and lecturers. While they are used to relating to students in a classroom setting, teachers now need to learn how to develop and use new delivery systems that work in hybrid settings. Current learning styles often require lecturers to integrate video and other media into their classroom presentations, a skill they may need to learn. And though various media are expected, it is recognized that presentations found on YouTube or by the Bible Project, as good as they might be, are "still a unidirectional way of education"—one voice speaking to the listeners. How can we develop courses that include "questions for interaction and reflection—guidance on how to dig deeper in certain topics and certain theologies" that will equally benefit students sitting in the classroom and those who are online? How can we design modules that rightly release the tension many lecturers feel between delivering their class notes and integrating their subject across disciplines? Even those who agree with the arguments for having a class that is 70% theoretical and 30% practical, recognize that some students and cultures only want content and do not want to be asked to think about the content or show how they could apply it in their setting and that others only want to know the technical issues of "what they need to do" without necessarily understanding why.

The difference in training models is reflected in the difference in students. At some seminaries, and undoubtedly in many TEE settings, the majority of students are professionals who are engaged in or preparing for bi-vocational ministry. While we "want to help and empower them to study," it is usually true that "Breadwinners … cannot leave their families for studies." It is therefore "important to bring theology to them." Some suggested sending teachers to where the students are, and while some extension programs have done this for years, for others it would require a paradigm shift. And even if ATA or other accrediting agencies agreed to the need for change, some denominations may not agree and refuse to ordain anyone with anything other than a standard degree.[7]

How can we develop courses that include "questions for interaction and reflection—guidance on how to dig deeper in certain topics and certain theologies" that will equally benefit students sitting in the classroom and those who are online? How can we design modules that rightly release the tension many lecturers feel between delivering their class notes and integrating their subject across disciplines?

Interestingly, very little was recorded about TEE during this session. While all participants were acquainted with the method, their understanding of it varies greatly. Some see its place as related to "background foundational, biblical understanding." Others apparently felt that TEE programs were problematic in that they failed to encourage students to attend Bible College or Seminary. Perhaps they misunderstood that one of the main arguments for TEE is that it provides training for those in ministry who cannot, for whatever reason, attend seminary.[8] Langham preaching programs were noted as being highly successful with many partners and preaching clubs across several countries. Some apparently recognized university student training to be low-level TEE programs. Perhaps this is the type of setting that was envisioned by someone who suggested that the Bible Project videos could be developed as a TEE course. Another positive suggestion is that online TEE courses could be used to train people in remote settings.

3. What are the five most important things that foreigners can do to help theological education in your country? What type of ministries can they best do and what level should they work at? What kind of person is needed to do it? How can they be best prepared for this?

When asked to find five things that foreigners could do to help theological education in their countries, very few groups listed that many, though a couple of groups went far beyond five. Even so, their engagement with the questions has produced ideas that missionaries and their agencies should pay close attention to. This section will comment on some of the significant issues discussed by the groups.

Several groups noted that a fundamental role for foreign missionaries should be to serve as mentors for local Christian leaders. In many cases, this seems to be understood in the sense of mentoring higher-level leaders, such as theological educators and doctoral-level students, to help build their skills, confidence, and vision. Some saw them best teaching at the MDiv level and up. One group saw the importance of identifying the worker's specific competencies. Those who come with the competency to teach in a classroom should begin here. Only after they have become culturally competent should they move on to help the church at a more local level. One participant felt that foreigners should help local leaders think biblically and critically in order to expose and correct false teaching that proliferates on social and other media. People serving in one theological college commented that expats "enrich the conversation by basically just being there." Their very presence provides "more diversity of people, culture, and methods." And because of what and who they know, "Expats provide international connections and networks" that locals don't have that can open doors to advanced degrees, books, and other resources.

The connections foreigners can bring in the area of publishing was mentioned by almost every group. Missionaries can

help the East Asian church catch up with the academic and publication standards used in the West and encourage local theologians to publish and produce theological resources for the church. One participant suggested that by helping local pastors write and publish research, missionaries can help the pastors grow as researchers and pastors. This benefits the pastor and demonstrates the importance for churches to produce their own literature. If the missionary is seen using and regularly refers to literature in the local language, the recognized value of those materials is multiplied. "This will encourage local people to do the same." Several said that missionaries should translate important books for the local audience.

Missionaries can also fill a unique role by serving as an "independent voice during discussions on contextualization." As insiders and outsiders view culture differently, foreigners can often help insiders discover aspects of their cultures that they are blind to. "Sometimes we are in the culture and cannot see ourselves clearly. We need help to reflect on the issues that we may have overlooked." Sensitive discussions on broad cultural issues can be mutually enriching.

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Participants noted that in some contexts, people are drawn to foreigners in ways they wouldn't be to nationals. This may be because they find the foreigner to be "interesting" or because they provide food or other things they wouldn't get otherwise. The attractiveness of foreigners is felt in the area of training, as many people are more likely to attend a course that is run by one. Some consider foreigners to be safer to talk to about some things due to the "distance" between them and the local culture. By opening up to a foreigner, one does not expose his thoughts or actions to the local society.

Concerning the important issue of what kind of foreign presence is desirable, one group said that missionaries should have a "mindset to help the church relate to society. Be an adaptable person who is willing to live at the same level as locals. And be willing to fulfil God's calling by empowering nationals and being religiously sensitive." Another group identified three types of missionaries.

1. Missionaries who work with the locals.

2. Missionaries who work above the locals and use them as workers.

3. Missionaries who don't work at all but simply enjoy living in the country.

This unflattering caricature of missionary life was recognized by multiple respondents. One reported that he saw more missionaries "working above the locals these days" than not. Another indicated that some missionaries were sent out by churches that expected them to plant and run their own church or establish their own Bible school. Where this "pioneer spirit" exists and may be demanded, it will be difficult for missionaries to work alongside or under local leaders. And though this may be true in some settings, a missionary who works in a big city said that most missionaries there work under local leadership who are in charge of churches, seminaries, and all finances. Missionaries join the team only by invitation.

When asked how a missionary can best prepare to serve, one group answered "language, language, language." The necessity of understanding language and culture and exhibiting the ability to form close friendships with locals stood out in many discussions. While this is nothing new, it highlights the obligation missionaries—whatever their homeland—have to invest in their new friends and their culture if they are to have ministries perceived as successful by the ones they have come to serve. In one context, it was noted that single workers "can often be better than families." This may be due to their relative freedom to interact with local people, and thus learn language and culture at a deeper level.

4. Please give us an honest appraisal of how foreign gospel workers (whether from somewhere else in Asia or another part of the world) perform in your culture. How can mission agencies better prepare missionaries to serve in your country? What kind of training would you like to see them have? What kind of school/ program should they attend to receive that training?

As might be anticipated, missionary performance across the region varies greatly. Some do an excellent job learning the local language and culture, settling into church practices they find new, and serving others with the gospel. Others do not. The ones who do best are said to be humble, culturally aware, and willing to adjust to local conditions. Participants were aware that missionaries come from different settings. For this reason, one said that they may need "to be more directive if from an egalitarian context," and to "trust and empower locals if from a hierarchical context." It all depends on who one is, where one works, and what kind of ministry one does.

Characteristics that make for good missionaries are numerous. In addition to language and culture acquisition, it is also common to hear that the most effective missionaries are those who become friends with their colleagues or students, love the local people, are genuine and authentic, and can keep confidences and be trusted. Love is key. As one leader said, "Love will cover mistakes." This can be instantly seen in the way one extends hospitality to the people and how one responds to local timekeeping practices. Do visits out of the blue produce stress or an opportunity for ministry? Does one know the proper way to receive a guest in one's home? How can we train people from various cultures to know how to be received well in *this* culture? One final summary of missionary preparedness stated that the best prepared will be "competent in dealing with conflict and reconciliation, aware of their own culture, and aware that



such things as methodology and success can't be neatly transplanted from one's home culture into the guest culture."

While participants said that they want missionaries who "become like 'one of us' and are real," they pointed out that Asian churches are not looking for people who can replicate what they can already do but those who have a depth of ministry experience and "seek to add value" by doing things that local Christians cannot. One group identified a need for people who could help them stop looking in on themselves and start to look outwards and develop a more global mindset. Another participant recalled how foreign missionaries entered his area and began by providing 100% of the funds while training new believers and leaders from scratch. Then, little by little, they withdrew their funds until the church was able to stand on its own. The missionaries had put organizational structures in place that worked and then moved on so that locals could run everything. This was viewed as positive.

A number of reasons were given as to why some missionaries don't fit in. One participant noted that "Foreign gospel workers who come from very mission-minded churches and are strongly motivated to reach out but lack cultural training have an unhealthy track record." And if those without cultural training were likely to fail, independent missionaries were often even more so. In part, this is because they had no "program" to follow and unclear or non-existent lines of accountability. To whom do they report? God, the home church, the local church, or nobody? As was rightly noted, "Good intentions, commitment, and passion are not enough."

At least one table group focused on issues of power. Do foreign missionaries hold onto power or work to empower locals for ministry? Sometimes the issues here are organizationally or situationally determined. Some organizations find working alongside or under local leadership easier. But some places have no local leaders. In certain settings, when foreigners and locals serve in leadership together, "whenever a confrontation needed to be made, the foreigner" would handle it. Whether this is because the local leaders were unwilling to confront others or because the foreigners were is left unstated, but either (or both) is possible. These variables all impact who takes charge and how leadership works. Some asked whether foreigners should be given a time limit in leadership positions. But what should be done if no local leader is able or willing to stand in the gap?

Financial control is an ever-present problem. This is true despite the positive story about the missionaries lessening the monetary supply as the church grew stronger. One group recorded that "Missionaries often have very strong personality on finance, funding. Final decisions always lie with them." While it was acknowledged that "They have some right since they earn the funds," it was also believed that it "would be good to involve locals" in the decision-making processes.

Not surprisingly, the list of what mission agencies should do to prepare missionaries for their task begins with the teaching of language and culture. Several groups felt that new workers would benefit from a "cross-cultural living experience as part of their training" that includes "guided reflection afterwards." As one group concluded, "Intercultural competence includes the diversity of cultural nuances among Asians. This cannot be taught in the classroom alone." Missionaries-in-training would be best served if, instead of simply learning about culture from books, they could experience "life and community with people." Another group concurred, suggesting that it would be good to "promote the concept to the sending churches to train their missionaries near to the field where they will serve." This was echoed in another suggestion that encouraged immersion in a local Bible college/seminary for even one or two semesters. Another participant, reflecting on his own experience, felt that missionaries in their first term should serve an apprenticeship to develop ministry skills while building up their language and cultural base. This could be done by organizing shadow internships during which the new worker learns ministry from experienced workers—including local ones.

In addition to language and cultural skills, some groups recognized the need for missionaries to gain awareness of country-specific issues that greatly impact the church. This could include training on the integration of culture and a dominant religion or on government policies regarding any number of pertinent issues. Suggestions on how to grow in these areas include holding team meetings to discuss pertinent topics with locals. As someone said, "Training should, as much as possible, be in a multi-cultural context." In addition to discussion groups, it was suggested that novels and stories that illustrate key issues could be recommended as they bring out "hidden cultural nuances of a complex society." Discussion could follow to deepen understanding. One group suggested that developing skills such as church planting would be best learned in-country from local Christians.

Surprisingly, few of the discussions explicitly mentioned the missionary's spiritual life. Perhaps it was just taken for granted. It was good to find one group that considered "growth and development in spiritual maturity" to be needed for training. Someone from another group felt that the biblical qualification for elders should be required for missionaries to ensure that they are spiritually mature. Another recognized that, though the subject can be controversial, missionaries need training in spiritual warfare, both

for one's personal spiritual security and to help others who may be more directly impacted by evil spirits.

5. What questions would you like to ask other theological educators serving in Asia about their work? What questions would you like to ask foreign missionaries and their agencies regarding our place in theological education in East Asia?

As should be expected, questions that are as wide open as the ones above are sure to produce a variety of responses. Since the overall context was theological education, the questions asked mainly fell within this area. Some questions pertained to the educational processes, outcomes, and individual course selection. Others centered on current and future teachers and administrators. Yet more asked about potential, current, and past students. A few considered how theological education can impact the larger society and culture. Along with these questions that East Asian theological educators would like to ask their colleagues in other settings, a number are addressed to missionaries and their societies.

Educational processes and outcomes

A number of questions were raised about educational processes. Some of these were quite wide-ranging and philosophical while others were more narrowly focused on particular issues. We will first consider some of the broader issues and then look at the more focused ones.

Several groups saw the need to begin thinking about theological education by addressing the purpose, the result of our teaching. One group expressly asked: "What is your vision for theological education? What is the end product?" As they saw it, for theological education to work in the context of Asia, it should "be guided by Asian values and culture." Though they didn't develop their ideas to any great extent, they believed that setting their goals in the light of Asian values and culture would impact issues such as decolonisation/contextualization, assessment (of students and faculty), and attitudes toward property (i.e., how to gain a right perspective between being locked into property and freeing our resources for "real mission activity").

Another group connected the end product with Jesus who "commanded us to make disciples. How does discipleship intersect with theological education and church planting?" Clearly, biblical discipleship is never equated with theological education. How then, do they relate? What part does theological education play in discipleship and how does our view of discipleship impact theological education at whatever level?

The questions mentioned earlier regarding school property were apparently raised because many theological colleges and seminaries in the West are facing cutbacks or closing doors due to decreased enrollment and some have sold their main campuses. Is this the future of theological colleges in Asia? To raise a broader discussion about this issue, they asked, "what are some proactive measures your seminary is taking to avoid this also happening to Asian seminaries in the future? How are you increasingly keeping relevant?" Though most theological colleges continually discuss property matters, it would be good to dialogue with others who face the same challenges so that we can learn together.

Conversations should not, however, be restricted to buying, developing, and using land and buildings. Some thus promoted discussions of other matters that are at the core of all theological education no matter where we teach or at what level. What are some of these issues? How do we, as several groups questioned, practically collaborate with the local church, other seminaries, and different departments within our seminary? AGST was raised as a model of collaboration that should stimulate us to find more ways to work together. What might these be and how might they be worked out across the region?

In addition to these broader issues, a few more narrowly focused matters were also raised.

- How should a curriculum review be carried out? How often should it take place? What should the process look like?
- What delivery methods are being used or trialed? How do students respond? How do faculty members respond?
- What forms of assessment can be used for holistic learning outcomes that do not require written assignments?
- "How do you encourage integration and interaction in your classroom settings?"
- "What is the place of the 'degree' in theological education? What is your expected outcome for theological education?"
- "How can we use symbolism to communicate the gospel better? How do we teach students to be sensitive to these possibilities?"
- "How do you do theology in your country? If you say contextual theology, what do you mean by it?"
- How does theological education address the change in focus from a deeper knowledge of theological foundations, biblical languages, and exegesis of texts to developing skills and practical outcomes? What is gained in the process? What is lost?

Courses

The change in focus mentioned in the last bullet above highlights a modification, if not a transformation, in educational philosophy that impacts the courses taught and the way they are taught. Though this is an essential discussion, few participants engaged the nature or existence of individual courses. Only the biblical languages were actually discussed. "What is the place of Biblical language in theological education?" Recognizing that few students study Greek or Hebrew in seminary and very few continue to use it after graduation, it was suggested

What part does theological education play in discipleship and how does our view of discipleship impact theological education at whatever level?



that they be given the tools necessary for doing word studies instead. In the estimation of this group, close to 90% of graduates will continue to do word studies throughout their careers as they prepare to preach and teach the Bible. They do not, however, explain how one can perform a word study without reference to the original languages.

Current and future teachers/ lecturers/administrators

A few questions addressed future and current teachers. Some participants would like to know how other schools select or otherwise source teachers and lecturers. Taking it to a slightly deeper level, one group asked, "What kind of professional skills and character traits do your faculty in preparation need in order to serve effectively in your context?" And once new faculty members are in place, how can we help them develop the teaching skills necessary to ensure their courses will not simply pass on information but retain a practical emphasis that students can use in ministry?

Only one group addressed the crucial issue of seminary leadership. "In view of the increased diversity, how is the leadership of the seminary learning to thrive in the increasing complexity?" Though they don't define "diversity" and "complexity," these words could refer to society in general or to the overall educational scene. Effective administrators at the highest level need a strong grasp of both and the help of others who can think through tough problems as they arise and do their best to anticipate ones that might reasonably emerge.

Students

Some questions focused on the students. One group questioned if others had noticed any trends among students that would help us better teach and prepare them for future ministry. Whether it is a trend or not, some participants apparently noticed that students can begin studies in one context and change to another. They therefore asked, "Can students attend one semester or short course with credit in another seminary in the same country, or even outside?" What about a student who can demonstrate competence in a subject or skill learned through TEE, individual study, or some other means? The principal of one institute questioned whether they should consider recruiting a more multi-cultural faculty and beginning English-language courses in order to draw new students.

Questions pertaining to current students included how to evaluate which delivery methods they find enjoyable and which they find challenging. One group suggested asking for the students' response to this question and considering how their responses might impact our teaching methodology and outcomes. Another consideration that would benefit current students is to design and implement courses that help them apply what they learn to their lives and ministry rather than just collecting information. One group questioned how we can help students relate to the wider political and cultural world. Highlighting an extremely important question that is easily missed, another group asked, "What is the place of nationals in the theological/missiological education of missionaries?" This is a question that mission agencies can't afford to miss.

Beyond potential or current students, several groups asked about graduates. One wanted to know what a graduate profile should look like and how it might shape the ongoing work of the seminary. Others wanted to know how we can help students continue learning and growing spiritually after graduation. As one group phrased it, "How are your graduates doing? Are you tracking them or maintaining relationships with your alumni?" In part, this was to get feedback about their studies and how the school could improve. It was also to discern whether they were "still in ministry or thriving in their workplace and transforming lives." A special concern was shown for women students. A further recognition is that alumni are a good resource for a seminary. This is undoubtedly true with regard to recommending new students and perhaps to providing financial support.

Society and culture

Some groups expressed a concern to serve the larger community and culture. One explicitly asked, "How can we serve our country?" Another wanted collaboration between theological educators across countries to be seen, among other ways, by their work in NGOs, in the marketplace, and in societal and community projects. One recognized the similarities and differences between the biblical and their own worldviews, and wondered about "the folk religious structures and worldview of other Asian societies? How are these worldviews understood missiologically?" The same group wondered, "What do you perceive to be uniquely Asian spirituality? How do we use its uniqueness to foster growth?" All these questions deserve deeper investigation.

It is widely recognized that the church and seminary need to discern ways in which to engage the larger society. Sometimes this is because the governments of many East Asian countries influence the church in many ways. How, it was asked, can theological students be taught to rightly relate to governing authorities? What about in countries like Thailand where some members of society are engaged in "aggressive protest?" What can a Bible college do to address such a scene? One group rightly asked, "What is the role of the theological educator" in such conversations? Just how vocal can or should they be in addressing

vital issues? Should they be willing to risk prison or exile? Broad discussions between schools and churches in different countries are needed.

When it comes to bringing the political and social context down to the student level, one group expressed a desire to understand "what is the breadth of the curriculum in terms of social engagements and cultural exegesis?" What can be done to improve this situation? How can the church in one country help the church in another? And when in a particular context one feels a "tightening of restrictions on foreign and educational activities," for whatever reason, what can be done to innovatively support theological education? What might it look like? Should degrees and diplomas be scrapped in some settings? How might that impact job searches and ordination?

While several groups considered how the church and seminary might influence society, only one expressed concern over the influence that society often exerts over the church. One of the major influences they identified is the common desire for status and recognition that drives many to pursue titles, promotions, and power. In addressing this common reality, the group said that, "Status in the church goes against servanthood in the churches." They concluded that this worldly seeking after position is a topic that needs to be more widely addressed.

Questions for missionaries and their societies

During the consultation, more than one participant questioned why it was organized by members of an international mission society—OMF International—and the initial questions drawn up by members of that organization. Why, they wondered, were these questions featured rather than others raised by the church in East Asia? The simple answer is that we had to start somewhere and, after more than 150 years working in Asia, OMF leaders wanted to evaluate our ongoing role in this context by asking Asian church leaders how we fit into their understanding of the current needs. If Asian leaders told us that foreign missionaries were no longer needed to help with theological education in the region—as difficult as we might find it—we must be ready to listen and respond appropriately. Similarly, if we were asked to provide many more workers to help in this area, we should be ready to listen and respond appropriately.

But the consultation wasn't organized just to answer the questions of a missionary society. It was envisioned to be the beginning of a dialogue in which theological educators working throughout East Asia could address important questions and build relationships that could produce collaborative partnerships that help the church address the current situation and prepare for the challenge of the future. Before the consultation began, we desired to see a network of theological educators developed to reflect on the needs of the church and consider how theological education (on all levels) can meet those needs. And while foreigners (from within and outside of East Asia) will probably have a role in these discussions, it is recognized Asian church leaders should have the premier place in formulating the questions and setting the format (and perhaps languages) that will be needed to answer them.

This openness to the larger questions was designed into question 5. The fact that most groups spent more time with the broader questions of theological education in the area and had fewer questions to ask missionaries and their societies highlights the issues they perceive to have higher priority. Even so, the questions addressed to missionaries give agencies some important areas for discussion that may guide thinking about the kind of people we should be mobilizing to serve in Asia. The questions asked revolve around four main areas in theological education: the role and methodology of theological education in Asia today, the place of missionaries in that context, collaboration across the region, and the place of missionaries in the overall cultural scene. As this paper is a report on the consultation, the questions will be raised without an attempt to provide answers. These are important issues that require more than the reflections of one author.

Several questions asked for insight into what we might call an outsider's view of the scene. Some wanted to get the missionaries' perspective on the state of theological education in East Asia today. Thus, one group asked, "What do foreign missionaries see as 'holes' in local Christianity and theological educational curriculum?" As with other questions, the answer will undoubtedly vary depending on who is asked and what context they work in. Good answers will come from asking widely and deeply. Following the previous question, the same groups asked: "What sort of graduates do you think we should be producing for the twenty-first century?" This was echoed by another group who queried "What is the agenda of foreign missions vis-à-vis their Asian ministries?" Restating the question, they asked: "What do you think we Asians need? What is the real need of Asian theological seminaries?" In the right setting, this could lead to an excellent discussion that would, no doubt, benefit all involved.



Focusing more directly on the role of missionaries engaged in formal theological education, one group wanted to know what missionaries can do to help faculty members keep students actively learning by fully engaging their subject. They want to ensure that students are not given a passive learning environment, but one that is stimulating, integrated, and practical. They further wanted to

How are the agencies aiding or facilitating greater collaboration between seminaries across cultures—especially in Asia? How do they help seminaries be more multi-cultural for a richer understanding of the Word? How can agencies help theological educators have a more collaborative mindset so that collaboration is not just with seminaries but with other like-minded organizations or even the community and marketplace?

know how we can teach students to apply what they learn to their own lives rather than simply pass on classroom material and expertise. These questions demonstrate a desire for an advisor or conversation partner who can discuss important issues at a deep level. Any missionary who joins this conversation must have great experience and wisdom.

Instead of asking how missionaries might benefit the local church, one group flipped the question by asking how they might strengthen the educational ministries engaged in by foreigners. "How," they asked, "are you contributing to the theological education in your context, especially in creative access nations (CANs)? How can we help?" These questions demonstrate a profound knowledge and positive assessment of the kind of ministries some missionaries engage in and a desire to help it improve. A discussion here could produce healthy collaboration to carry out an important ministry.

One group's interest in knowing how missionaries help develop collaboration should give organizations pause for reflection. "How are the agencies aiding or facilitating greater collaboration between seminaries across cultures—especially in Asia? How do they help seminaries be more multi-cultural for a richer understanding of the Word?" The same group asked further: "How can agencies help theological educators have a more collaborative mindset so that collaboration is not just with seminaries but with other like-minded organizations or even the community and marketplace?" As many agencies work in multiple countries, it was suggested that they might be able to use their networks to help students take part in overseas training or internships. Do they? Could they? What would it look like?

A final set of questions address the place of the missionary in the broader society. Though mission agencies often insist that we cannot express political views but must stay neutral since we are guests in a country, the reminder comes loud and clear that "Missionaries cannot sit on the side. Make your stand. Jesus was not neutral. Why do you not care? Do you care? Can you take sides when it matters? How can we help local Christians to express their opinions? How about your conscience in being neutral in these issues? Your theology? How can you express neutrality? Can you explain why you are choosing that?" These questions reject simple answers and will require deep thought and ongoing dialogue as we search out the mind of God and our place serving the church in Asia.

Conclusion

In many ways, the theological educators' consultation served like a physical examination by reminding us where we are, what we are doing well, and what we need to improve. At the end of the three days of questions and discussions, it was clear that we had only begun to consider the potential needs. This may have spurred on the general agreement that this should not be a one-off event but that deeper reflection should be made so that theological education throughout East Asia can continue to develop.

One important outcome arising from the consultation would be for a group of educators to organize a future meeting to build upon the discussion. Another outcome would be for smaller meetings to be organized, designed to focus on more regional or national concerns. For these outcomes to be achieved, a network of theological educators should be organized who devote themselves to reflect on both local and wider needs and consider ways that they can be met. The precise nature of the group—just how formal or *ad hoc* it should be—is perhaps not as important as its aim to support and enhance theological education from grassroots to professional level throughout East Asia.

As we seek to develop as people called to serve the church by training leaders, let us not be afraid of asking the difficult questions. And as we seek answers, let us boldly approach others whose experiences differ from ours and, through earnest discussion and reflection, seek to identify the way forward. And in our desire to collaborate with others, let us never forget that it is only as God enables us that we will find solutions to our questions and be able to lay the pathway that will facilitate the training of church leaders throughout the region so that they can faithfully and skillfully build up his church and equip it for ministry. **MRT**

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[1] Warren Beattie, "OMF and Theological Education: Training and Partnership with the Asian Church," unpublished paper, May 2008 and "Survey of OMF Fields in Relation to Theological Education 2008," unpublished paper, May 2008.

[2] In some cases, the countries chosen to be part of a group was related to the number of participants representing those countries rather than their geographic proximity or the state of the church and theological education found there.

[3] At least one group considered the possibility that if we asked these same questions to leaders from a younger generation we may be given greatly different answers.

[4] During a different question time, a participant noted that "Our cultural perspective of education does not include critical thinking. This has to be taught in theological education settings, not assumed."

[5] Teaching online courses to a screenful of dark gray rectangles was experienced by many.

[6] In a different context, another participant said that the kind of person who would seek an online degree may well be the kind who would try to perform ministry without directly interacting with people.

[7] This may be tied to the inherent traditional tendencies of denominations to reject new ways of doing things. In some cases, however, it may be a perception that online programs do not adequately prepare people for church ministry where personal interaction is essential. What can be designed into an online or hybrid program to ensure that students demonstrate their ability to interact well with others and thus show that they are prepared for pastoral ministry?

[8] See the paper, "Contextual equipping for the people of God and their leaders using TEE," by Graham Aylett, David Burke, and Iljo de Keijzer, later in this issue.

Partnering with the Thai Church in Leadership Development and Theological Education

David D. Chang



David served as an apprentice with OMF Thailand from 1996 to 1999. In 2003, he and his wife Gladys became OMF members. He was previously the Regional Leader of Bangkok and now teaches at Bangkok Bible Seminary. He holds a DMin from Fuller Theological Seminary.

I confess to daydreaming when I was a theological student at Singapore Bible College over twenty years ago. My mind drifted in and out of my surroundings, not because the afternoon sun in Singapore was blazing hot or the blasting air-conditioner somehow affected my concentration. I remember receiving handouts after handouts from a lecturer who had plenty of information to pass on to all the Master of Divinity students. But as I looked around the room filled with sleepy-eyed and unengaged pastors, church elders, or future-missionaries who looked equally-bored, I knew that there was a glaring gap in that particular class. While there was an honest attempt to transmit knowledge from the professor to the students, there was no energy or enthusiasm. Our time together was not impactful because there was no sharing of deep life-experiences from this teacher or passion to communicate how truths can be lived out or worked out in our ministry context. Not too long after graduation, all the handouts went into the recycling basket.

Thankfully, this class was the exception and not the norm. Many professors from the seminary shared with us not only their knowledge of the Scriptures, but their lives and lessons learned from ministry as well. Their teaching inspired and impacted us for many years to come.

Does the above scenario sound familiar? Have we sat at the feet of some professors who touched our hearts and equipped us for effective ministry, while others made us wish we were somewhere else or doing something more meaningful? This paper is not an attempt to point out the methods of effective teaching or training, but mainly a testimony of my own journey into leadership development and theological training. However, within my story, you will see that theological training is not only strategic, but also an invitation sounded out by national leaders in Thailand and many other Asian countries. You will also see how God prepares his servants to become a teacher, coach, and trainer, which is a process that cannot be rushed. In the end, I will conclude with a few lessons learned in the journey towards real partnership.

The journey towards genuine partnership

At first, I was not interested in teaching in a seminary. I wanted to be a pioneer church planter and share the gospel with the poor. As a single missionary apprentice, I was sent to Uthai Thani, the poorest province in Central Thailand, to minister among farmers, youth, and children. I had studied Thai for six months at the OMF Lopburi Learning Center, but that was nothing compared with learning language and culture by immersion. Church planting under Thai leaders meant eating Thai food three meals a day, listening to Thai conversations all day long, sleeping on the floor with a thin mattress, and dreaming in Thai.

The first three years were by no means easy. It was very challenging physically and emotionally. I lost a lot of weight due to diarrhea and dengue fever. I often felt lonely and culturally distant even though I was surrounded by Thai brothers and sisters. The best thing that came out of that time period was slowly gaining acceptance by Thais. I learned to laugh at Thai jokes and spent quality time with people. Thai church leaders said to me, "David is now a Thai!" Some even wanted me to marry their daughter! This period of my life was a key piece of the puzzle to my long-term calling, or a foundational stage in my journey towards true partnership. Without learning the language and immersion in the culture, I would not be able to relate effectively and deeply with Thais. And without deep relationships, there can be no real discipleship and leadership training in the Asian context.

Fast-forward to being a married man. In 2004, Gladys and I started reaching

out to people in the slums in the outskirts of Bangkok in partnership with a small Thai church. We had the joy of seeing some people come to Christ during that term, including university students and migrants from the working class. But we also felt the pain and sorrow of seeing new believers fall away or leave the church undiscipled. However, the biggest ministry challenge during those first two terms for me was working with Thai pastors. As a missionary, I had largely different expectations towards the work. In our team meetings, I often asked: "When is our next evangelistic outreach or visit to the lost?" But my Thai co-workers proposed: "Let's plan the next fellowship time for our church members." We also clashed over communication styles. I wanted to speak and receive information in a straight-forward way, while my Thai colleagues valued more subtle and round-about ways of discussing issues. I planned my days with multiple agendas, while Thais enjoyed hanging out and "wasting time" in my view. All these cultural differences compelled me to look for answers. I conducted research on the subject of partnership and explored effective ways for missionaries and Thais to work together. I shared some of my findings in a previous MRT article and will elaborate on this topic further.[1]

Along the journey, the Lord also blessed us with five children, including triplets! Our four younger kids were all born in Thailand. Having a large family was literally stretching, but it also opened tremendous doors for us to witness to our Thai neighbors and friends. Parents from our community often visited us and asked questions, such as: "How do you make your children sit still and eat?" or "How do you manage a home with so many kids?" Keep in mind that most of the time we not only had our own children at home, but half a dozen Thai kids going in and out of our house as well. Our response to their inquiry was along the lines of: "God is our help, by his grace alone!" We shared simple testimonies to Thais who were interested and open because we had opened our lives to them. Many Thais also come from broken backgrounds and are in need of healthy models or mentoring. We developed credibility and trust because we lived, struggled, and grew alongside the locals. We were in no way perfect role models. At times, our neighbors could hear our kids throw a tantrum, or hear us as parents shouting loudly back at our kids. This was perhaps our way of doing holistic missions, not just an exchange of information, but sharing of lives in all its messiness while trusting in Christ. I believe that this aspect of our journey was also necessary and non-negotiable if we are to impact Thai leaders for long-term fruitful ministry. Leadership training starts from the home according to the Apostle Paul: "for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church" (1 Tim 3:5).[2]

We developed credibility and trust because we lived, struggled, and grew alongside the locals.

While I was pursuing part-time studies for a ThM in missiology from Fuller Seminary around 2009, Bangkok Bible Seminary actually invited me to consider joining the faculty. After praying about this offer, I told them, "Please give me a few more years." I felt strongly that more on-the-ground experience in the Thai church context was needed if I should one day teach in a seminary. So from 2007 to 2017, I accepted the role of OMF Regional Leader in Bangkok. Part of my ministry was to help strengthen a handful of new church plants, and mentor OMF missionaries to work alongside of churches under the Association of Churches in Thailand Bangkok (ACTB).

As I partnered, networked, and labored alongside of many church leaders in the city, I grew in experience and understanding of the bigger picture. Because Bangkok is the center of cultural and religious influence in Thailand, it is also a place of intense spiritual warfare. Too many new missionaries underestimate the power of darkness and the dependency upon God required to establish God's work and equip leaders in the city. Harvie Conn, a scholar in urban missions from an earlier generation, wrote:

> In cities where urban power is overtly religious in orientation and strongly institutionalized, it may be very difficult to see strong church growth or a change of faith. With major religious symbolic significance, such a city does not easily open its doors to theological outsiders.[3]

I also realized that there is a common phenomenon of many Thais being willing to pray the sinner's prayer, but few are discipled properly and grow steadfastly in the



The Chang family

local church.[4] In many cases, the back door of the church was wider than the front door.[5] After decades of evangelism, the great majority of local churches were stagnant. This, I observed, was also due to the problem of pastoral leadership. The lack of vision, management skills, as well as godly character among some Thai leaders have hindered the expansion of the Thai church.



Spending time with Thai believers

The desire to see Thai churches truly flourish and glorify God compelled me to study further and consider how to help pastors lead more biblically, spiritually, and missionally. From 2014 to 2018, Fuller Seminary offered a Doctorate of Ministry for a cohort in Chiang Mai, Thailand, specializing in Leadership in the Asian Context. It was advantageous that I did not need to put aside my ministry responsibilities, and the research and interactions with other leaders two weeks per year helped me to become more effective in my work. During this time period, I continued to observe first-hand the need for more Thai pastors to teach the Scriptures faithfully. Many preachers only made use of familiar passages but omitted large portions of the Bible from the pulpit. Typical sermons centered on what human beings need to do for God, rather than God's attributes and what he has already done for us. Integrity and spirituality were also missing from the lives of some leaders, resulting in large-scale scandals and leading young believers to stumble in their faith. Moral failure or issues related to character were not only a problem for Thais, but impacted foreign missionaries as well. Extensive reading about the topic of missional churches shaped my thinking as I considered how the gospel has been planted for nearly two hundred years into Thai soil but has yielded fruit in less than one percent of its population. I started asking the question: "What is the most strategic thing for me to do?" The answer came in the form of a charge from 2 Timothy 2:2, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."

The Lord also gave me long-term friendships with dozens of Thai pastors in both rural and urban settings. Thousands of hours were spent listening to and understanding their struggles and praying for them. Without personal insight into the challenges of Thai pastoral ministry, ... it would have been difficult to communicate theology in a relevant way.

Training leaders non-formally in ACTB

Before accepting the invitation to teach full-time at Bangkok Bible Seminary, another component was needed in my ministry formation—gaining experience in coaching and training leaders non-formally. I learned how to coach and conduct seminars for Thais by watching senior missionaries. For example, our former Thailand Field Director involved us in Project Paul, a very interactive and practical seminar for equipping church planters. The Lord also gave me long-term friendships with dozens of Thai pastors in both rural and urban settings. Thousands of hours were spent listening to and understanding their struggles and praying for them. Without personal insight into the challenges of Thai pastoral ministry, such as family life, finances, relational conflicts, culture, and worldview, it would have been difficult to communicate theology in a relevant way. Some coaching seminars held by OMF and other organizations have also been very helpful in my ministry.[6]

In January 2016, I was invited by the Chairman of ACTB to start leadership training for a group of Thai leaders. During the first year, I divided the twenty-five churches into two regions. I asked local churches to volunteer hosting the training events, which were usually held on Saturday mornings for three hours. I focused on spiritual formation, personal development, avoiding pitfalls of leadership, and mentoring. The Baan Suk Kasem church in North Bangkok was the most enthusiastic. They hosted



Fig. 1 Clinton's phases of leadership development

seminars regularly and a core group of lay leaders participated eagerly. The main challenge during the first year, however, was a lack of consistency in attendance from other churches. While those who came appeared excited and gave positive feedback, it was rare to see a pastor participate consistently in order to build on top of what had been taught. Causes of inconsistency have to do with distance of travel, conflicting programs on Saturdays—as most churches have other competing agendas, such as worship practice—and lack of deeper bonding in relationships.

The goal for the second year was to build momentum and gain wider recognition for the ACTB training events. Outside instructors were invited to complement my sessions; some were experienced missionaries and Thai leaders. Topics ranged from prayer counseling to the five levels of leadership by John Maxwell.[7] The seminars were longer, usually from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, including a lunch break. At the end of the second year, more leaders showed interest. However, there was still a lack of consistency in attendance and content.

During this time period, I developed a training manual of twelve lessons in Thai and English based on what was taught, needs of the Thai church, feedback from participants, and my own further studies. This training manual was included in the final project of my DMin studies.[8] My point is that effective leadership training should not come from foreign resources downloaded from cyberspace, but cultivated from the grassroots. The content of my teaching was forged in the context of Thailand, OMF, and ACTB. Senior missionaries modeled leadership training for me, and Thai pastors gave me the opportunity to serve, make mistakes, learn, and grow. I am truly grateful for all these people and experiences from the Lord. The training skills, style of communication, and substance that I learned in non-formal settings have now become more impactful in a formal institution, but that does not mean I discontinue informal church-based theological training. The task of all theological educators should be "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph 4:12–13).

I would like to encourage new missionaries who may have a burden for theological education to take the long-range view and not rush the process of preparation. Consider the findings of Bobby Clinton's research conducted among hundreds of contemporary leaders and from church history. In his classic book *The Making of a Leader*, Clinton lays out the five phases that are common to a leader's development (see Figure 1).

Phases I, II, and III are all part of God's provision in helping a potential leader to establish a solid foundation before embarking on significant ministries. During these phases, which may take five to fifteen years, God is more interested in the leader's personal growth than what he or she can accomplish for the kingdom. Clinton wrote that "God is quietly, often in unusual ways, trying to get the leader to see that one ministers out of what one is," more than what one can do.[9]

If the emerging leader passes various trials and testing, they move into greater effectiveness and more impactful roles. Many, however, may give up on ministry or go through long periods of wilderness due to disobedience. Phase IV is when a leader's life, experiences, and gifts are blended together to influence others for God's glory. This usually does not happen in a missionary's first term. From my observation, a cross-cultural missionary in Thailand can only begin to make lasting impact after eight to ten years of on-the-ground ministry. Sadly, very few missionaries these days persevere long enough to reach Phase V. Convergence is when God moves a missionary into a role that matches gift-mix, experience, temperament, and even calling into a geographical area or target group.[10] This phase is also when we recognize most clearly that our ministry is given by the Lord, and not something we strived for or achieved in our own strength. As God is the one who entrusted us with the work, he will empower and supply the grace for us to be truly fruitful.

Invitation to theological education and lessons learned

Two Thai leaders invited me to consider partnership through theological education. The first was Dr. Manote Jangmook, who is the current president of Bangkok Bible Seminary. As I sat in his office after being invited to preach at the BBS chapel, he said to me: "The time period for missionaries to pass out tracts on street corners is over! Instead, missionaries should focus on training Thais." What he said reminded me of the different phases of missions, which consist of pioneering, parenting, partnering, and participating.[11] Missionaries pioneered many churches and schools in the past and were seen as parental figures, but what the Thai church needs today are those willing to partner or even work under national leadership as participants. Dr. Manote is a church historian who specializes in Thai church history. In his view, Thais should be doing most of the evangelism and pastoral ministries, while missionaries can still play a strategic role—not by leading from the front, but by coaching and training the Thais. He also said, "New missionaries must get some experiences in local churches before they start teaching."[12]

A cross-cultural missionary in Thailand can only begin to make lasting impact after eight to ten years of on-the-ground ministry.

I was thrilled to have a part in training future Thai pastors and missionaries. Besides examining the biblical and historical basis for missions, I shared my personal journey, encounters with cultural conflicts, and church planting experiences to younger leaders who were eager to learn.

The second person who influenced my decision to join BBS was Pastor Somchai Songthangtham, who is the current Dean of Students. I first met Pastor Somchai in a Christian coffee shop. We struck up a good conversation, and he said to me, "I really like OMF missionaries because they are *samatha*." I asked him what this Thai word meant. He said it means they have a simpler life-style and are more down-to-earth. They don't buy expensive cars or have too many material possessions. This, to him, is a strong value and appropriate for cross-cultural workers. Pastor Somchai first invited me to teach an Introduction to Missions class in 2016, since the previous missions professor had gone overseas to study. During the first two semesters of teaching this course, I had to take three different forms of public transportation to school, which included riding wildly against traffic on the back of motorcycle taxis in order to arrive on time. I did not mind the risk, because I was thrilled to have a part in training future Thai pastors and missionaries. Besides examining the biblical and historical basis for missions, I shared my personal journey, encounters with cultural conflicts, and church planting experiences to younger leaders who were eager to learn.

After teaching part-time for a few years, I was invited to teach two to three subjects per semester starting in 2019. Pastor Somchai also asked me to teach the Book of Acts because he wanted someone to teach it from a missionary perspective. Teaching Acts was really a "dream come true" for me, because I loved and read it more than any other book in Scripture from my early days in the ministry. I also studied Acts once a year with other OMF missionaries through Project Paul. The Walk through the Bible project inspired me to come up with my own hand motions for the twenty-eight chapters of Acts. I saw how students caught on to this more active form of learning, including masters level students in their forties, who memorized the hand motions and passed them on to others. One important lesson that I learned through this was how to engage Thais who were more oral learners. Most students did not read a whole lot, but they learned by doing, talking, and participating in classroom activities. I lowered my expectations for the number of pages of required reading, but focused on healthy classroom interactions, skits, debates, presentations, and activities that helped them to enjoy the process of learning.

However, after enjoying a short period of "success" in teaching various classes in person, we were hit by COVID-19. All teachers, myself included, went through a steep learning curve. We taught through Zoom and other online platforms, hoping things would eventually return to normal. During this time, I started a YouTube channel and learned to produce my own video clips to help students to review content and have more online resources to share with others, since access to physical libraries became difficult. However, as most of the world, including local churches, reopens, we find that many seminaries around the world are not returning to in-person education; some have even sold their campuses.[13]

The leadership of BBS decided to go with hybrid learning, giving students the option to study either in person or online. The result is that there has been an increase of online enrollment, because Thai students who are geographically



BBS teachers and BTh students



Learning activity with MMin students

far from Bangkok, including some who live overseas, can now earn even an MDiv degree online. The negative impact is that there are now fewer students coming to the institution physically, resulting in the loss of in-person community and doing life together. One of my great joys was meeting with students for informal mentoring on campus. There are obvious pros and cons to this current trend of online education, and I am still feeling uncertain about the future. A key lesson I am learning in this recent debate is trusting the Lord to guide our institution and submitting to Thai leadership. Personally, I would prefer to make it mandatory for MDiv students to learn in person for at least a few times per semester, and I actually stated my position respectfully in our faculty meetings. However, those who are in positions of authority have decided to keep the options open, and I can only entrust this matter to God and continue to serve under their direction.

Another interesting opportunity that BBS has also given to me was to teach the Book of Revelation. I never had even a side interest in eschatological debates, nor was I in any way an expert on the subject. But during the world-wide pandemic, many Thais became interested in this book and there was an explosion of online teaching on the end times. I was pushed to study the word and sought to present a more biblical and balanced view to students. Surprisingly, the class was well received, and I have been invited to teach Revelation almost every semester since then, in response to the growing interest of the Thai church. In one semester, I had 175 Thai lay leaders enrolled in the evening sessions. The key lesson I learned was to be willing to accept a challenging task and do something outside of my comfort zone. This was certainly true for me as a missionary more familiar with subjects like missiology and leadership development. I am learning to partner with the Thai church, not solely focused on my own specializations, but responding to the needs of the current context.

In conclusion, I am deeply thankful to God for leading me into theological education for his own glory. He is the Lord of the times and seasons. I have been placed in a strategic role, not because of my abilities, but because of his grace and gifts. I am learning to hold these gifts with an open hand, knowing that Christ can give them for a season and take them away or use me elsewhere as he sees fit. The OMF missionary that modeled this attitude and perspective for me was Henry Breidenthal, the founder and first president of Bangkok Bible Seminary. He reminded the faculty many times, "Don't forget that BBS is a story written in heaven." What he meant was that the school originated from God and is still being orchestrated by him. Missionaries and teachers are only invited to join this wonderful narrative through humble participation and service. We can also trust that God will complete the good work that he has started. **MRT**

I am learning to partner with the Thai church, not solely focused on my own specializations, but responding to the needs of the current context.

[1] David D. Chang, "Growing in Partnership with Thai Church Leaders," *Mission Round Table* 10, no.1 (January 2015): 26–31.
[2] All Scriptures in this paper are quoted from the English Standard Version.
[3] Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City and the People of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 199.
[4] For an examination of some of the issues involved, see Karl Dahlfred, "The Sinner's Prayer in Animistic Cultures: Problems and Solutions," *Mission Round Table* 15, no. 1 (January–April 2020): 4–11.
[5] For a similar phenomenon in a different context and some suggested solutions, see Allen J. Swanson, *The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1981) and *Mending the Nets: Taiwan Church Growth and Loss in the 1980s* (Pasadena: William Carey, 1986).
[6] I recommend attending the Coaching Course held by the OMF Training and Development Department and the Leadership Development Team.
[7] John Maxwell, *The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximise Your Potential* (New York: Center Street, 2013).
[8] David D. Chang, "Developing Thai Leaders for Long-term Fruitfulness within the Association of Churches Bangkok" (DMin Training Manual Final Project, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2018).
[9] J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Singapore: Navigators, 1988), 30–34.
[10] Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 34.
[11] Four stages of missions are part of Lesson 7 in the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course.
[12] The quotes come from personal conversations with Dr. Manote Jangmook.
[13] Matt Ayars, "The Future is Campus-Free," *Christianity Today* (3 October 2022), 32–33, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2022/october/virtual-online-seminary-is-future.html (accessed 17 October 2022), and Kirsten Sanders, "How Seminary Downsizing Cuts into Community," *Christianity Today* (19 May 2022), https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2022/may-web-only/gordon-conwell-teds-evangelical-seminary-closure-financial.html (accessed 17 October 2022).

Mobilising Workers to Advance Discipleship in East and Southeast Asia

Allen McClymont



Allen and his wife Litsa have been members of OMF since 2003. They are currently two of OMF's Area Representatives in London and the Southeast of England. Between 2004 and 2012, Allen was a lecturer at Seminary Theoloji Malaysia in Malaysia where he taught New Testament, Theology, and Greek. In 2021, he successfully completed his doctoral research on the remarkable growth of Christianity in West Malaysia after the Second World War, which he will happily talk to you about for hours if you let him.

In September, I had the privilege of attending the Theological Educator's Consultation that is the focus of this issue of *Mission Round Table*. As an Area Representative, I was interested in understanding better who OMF should be mobilising to meet the needs for discipleship in the countries where we serve. While the consultation covered a wide range of issues, I will focus on the third of the five questions discussed in the consultation:

> What are the five most important things that foreigners can do to help theological education in your country? What type of ministries can they best do and what level should they work at? What kind of person is needed to do it? How can they be best prepared for this?'

Our focus will be on the future and look at the "what," "where," and "who" OMF International should focus on when mobilising people to serve in the area of discipleship and theological education.

What: Discipleship

The focus of the consultation was on the need to "make disciples" among the people groups in East and Southeast Asia. This included both non-formal discipleship training and formally accredited education of the academy.

Participants included representatives from both groups. Those focused on non-formal training included the Increase Association (https://www.increaseassociation.org), an organisation that is focused on multi-lingual, church-based TEE training. Its vision is to see churches equipped to disciple and empower church members for mission, ministry, and leadership. Non-formal training was also represented by the Langham Partnership (https://uk.langham.org), which seeks to improve the quality of preaching and other aspects of ministry in churches. OMF already has several members linked with this organisation. Mobilising workers requires that we find people who will support and encourage the training of church members to be disciples of Jesus Christ in their local context.

While the focus of some of attendees was on non-formal training, the majority of

Accreditation

One of the distinctive features of formal theological education in East and Southeast Asia is the method of accreditation. To have control of their curriculum, most seminaries and Bible colleges are accredited by an association of likeminded institutions rather than by the education department of the country in which they are found. This is done to maintain independence from governments that are often not sympathetic to Christianity. Two associations operate in the region: one is distinctively evangelical and the other supports mainline denominations.

A. Evangelical

- Asia Theological Seminary (ATA) for initial theological studies
- Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST) for advanced theological studies

B. Mainline Denominations

- Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) for initial theological studies
- ATESEA Theological Union (ATU), formerly known as South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), for advanced theological studies

those who came focused on the formal training of pastors and other full-time workers. This includes teaching the core subjects that make up a formal degree as well as practical subjects, including global mission, which are usually taught as electives. OMF is often seen as a source of teachers for elective subjects because of its experience in church planting across the region. For these subjects, practical experience is valued above theological qualifications. OMF is also a source of teachers for core subjects in the curriculum. For these subjects, a higher level of theological qualification is required and candidates with advanced degrees are needed.

The consultation recognised the need for OMF to provide suitably qualified workers across the curriculum, and not just in missiological subjects. It particularly valued the way OMF can provide special skills and an "outsiders' perspective." The key caveat raised by the consultation was the need for these teachers to have the right attitude as Christian servants. The need is for people who will come to work alongside Asian colleagues rather than come as experts to show how teaching "should be done."

The consultation also recognised that OMF has at times been criticised for leaving institutions and churches "to fend for themselves" before they were ready. Transition is always difficult and is an important factor for OMF fields and leadership to consider as a church or institution develops local leaders. Good communication is essential to avoid misunderstandings and maintain relationships.

Where: East and Southeast Asia

One of the joys of attending the consultation was the opportunity to meet with guests and OMF members from a range of peoples, nations, and languages (Revelation 7:9). They represented the wonderful diversity that exists among the people groups that OMF serves. The consultation also highlighted the challenge of working with churches in different countries among different people groups at different stages of their development.

When considering where OMF could send people to work in formal theological education, the type of worker needed will vary depending on the stage of development a church is at. At one end of the scale are countries like Malaysia and Singapore where the need for workers has diminished. Locally trained leaders are available, and, except in very specific circumstances, visas can be difficult to obtain. At the other end of the scale are countries where formal theological education is in its infancy. In these countries, there is a need for lecturers who are fluent in the local language and gifted in teaching.

The situation in Asia is fluid and changes quickly but this table aims to reflect the situation at the time of the consultation for the countries of East and Southeast Asia represented.

Opportunities to teach formal theological education

Lecturers using English	Lecturers using Local Languages
Philippines Thailand (J. O. Fraser Centre)	Philippines Indonesia Cambodia Mongolia Thailand Vietnam Japan

The table highlights that the greatest need is for members who can lecture in the local language, have a good understanding of the culture, and are good teachers. While it is possible to recruit people with the necessary qualifications from sending countries outside Asia, it may be better to look at people who already serve in OMF and people sent from or trained in East and Southeast Asian countries.

Who: Qualities and qualifications needed

In my role as an Area Representative, we often ask field directors what kind of members they would like to receive. Inevitably, they ask for qualities related to character rather than skills. To last in cross-cultural mission requires perseverance, adaptability, and love for the people you are partnering with. To teach in theological education, however, there is also the need for a particular level of qualifications. While this is an oversimplification and there are many exceptions, to teach elective subjects and in the local language at a diploma or BTh level, a minimum master's qualification is needed. To teach core subjects or in English at the master's level or above, there is an increasing need for qualifications at a doctoral level. The challenge is not just to find an academic, but one that wants to see the churches in Asia equipped with leaders who are well trained and are able as disciples of Jesus Christ to disciple others.

While the assumption is that the source of these people will be "ready-made" individuals who have achieved the required level of qualifications and are seeking to work cross culturally, the consultation highlighted the need for OMF to intentionally look for members from within the mission who might consider taking up this form of ministry. The best people to meet this need are those who have worked in the country and have experienced and understand the culture.[1]

Has the time come when OMF should encourage enquirers who are interested in making disciples in Asia to prepare themselves by completing their theological education in English in Singapore, Malaysia, or the Philippines, or in Chinese in Taiwan? Any practical problems that may arise for someone wanting to obtain a visa to study in Asia would be repaid significantly as he or she is able to prepare for service with OMF in Asia itself.

An area where OMF could also consider allocating resources is to work even more closely with organisations that are not part of formal theological education. OMF already has a good relationship with Langham, but this and other opportunities could be looked at to enhance the reach of programmes in countries where OMF has a presence.

In conclusion, in answer to the "what" question, the consultation highlighted the need to focus more broadly on discipleship and not only on formal theological education. The answer to the "where" question was "it depends." As always, OMF should be led by the field and its relationship with the church, to partner in a way that is appropriate to the stage of development the church is at. And in answer to the "who" question, there was a recognition that OMF sending countries should mobilise people to join the mission to work in theological education and OMF fields should identify workers already on the field who may be able to take up more significant roles in theological education, whether in formal or non-formal settings.

As OMF's role in countries develops from evangelism and church planting to discipleship and partnering in the healthy growth of the church, we need to become more intentional in identifying and training suitable members from within the field to work with those involved in discipleship training for church members and in formal training institutes for pastors and full-time workers. At the same time, sending countries need to be looking to recruit Bible college and seminary-trained workers with a heart for working with the church in East and Southeast Asia to develop and train members and leaders so that local churches can grow spiritually and numerically. **MRT**

[1] For an example of how this can work, see David Chang's article in this issue.

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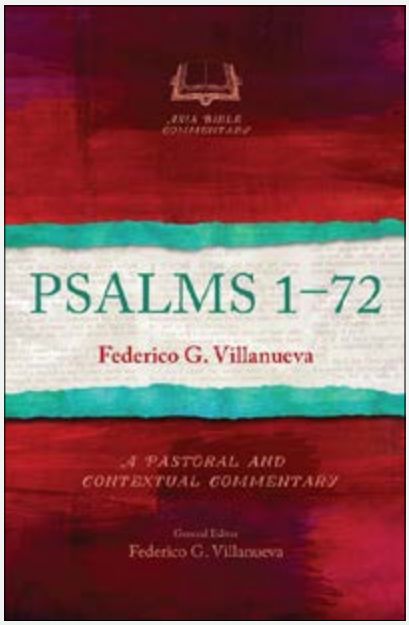

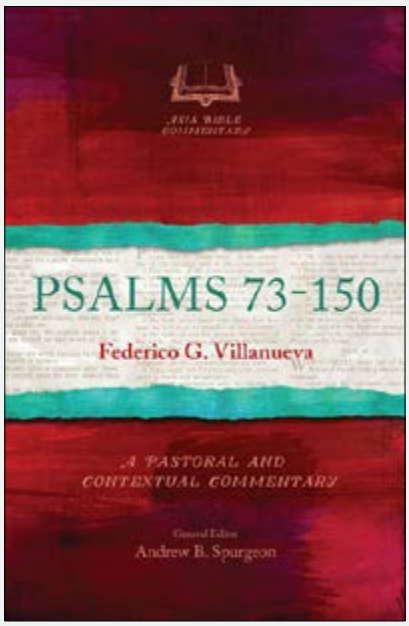

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Psalms 73–150: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary

Federico Villanueva. Carlisle: Langham, 2022. ISBN 978-83973-264-5. 420 pp.

Reviewed by Martin Paterson

Christians across all generations have returned time and again to the Psalms. Like shade on a warm day or views from a stunning vista, these songs provide rest for the weary, language expressing deep longings, and imagery granting a greater appreciation of God's glory. Though there is no shortage of material on the Psalms, Villanueva's two-volume commentary (Psalm 1–72; Psalm 73–150) holds a unique place.

A key reason is the balance between well-researched scholarship and pastoral application. In a move to address a weakness in Psalms scholarship from the West, Villanueva sets out to apply each Psalm to the world we live in today. Each Psalm commentary follows the pattern of application then detailed, though not overly technical, study. Real-world scenarios are addressed with sensitivity regarding the tone or mood of the psalmist, allowing the text to speak on its own terms.

Although Villanueva speaks from the Filipino context, his observations are not limited to this setting. Through regular use of Filipino language or idioms, he enables the reader to access a potentially unfamiliar culture and some of these insights open interesting avenues of discussion. For example, his use of the Filipino concept of *Pagsusumbong* is a particularly notable contribution to thought on imprecatory prayer.

Two further details are worth highlighting. First, the topical interludes interspersed throughout each volume are helpful and are a particular strength of these works. Not shying away from the challenges that the Psalms present, Villanueva handles the subjects of psychological depression, social justice, and colonialism in a considered manner. While these are brief treatments that could easily be expanded upon, they are helpful stimuli for further thought and discussion.

Secondly, there is excellent content assessing the lament Psalms. There are circumstances personally, locally, and globally that lead us to times of deep pain or darkness. How should we walk with others through these times? How do we navigate them ourselves? With a sensitive and perceptive voice, Villanueva leads the reader to see the value of rediscovering biblical lament in the face of personal struggle and global turmoil.

These volumes will have varied use and appeal. They will be a good reference tool for Bible teachers, whether in Asia or other parts of the world, as they seek to provide theological reflection with pastoral application. Some readers will find these to be helpful companions in reading the Psalms from a devotional perspective. Each Psalm is addressed, but in a manageable amount for daily use. For students at seminary across the world, they will provide a good way to engage with pastoral scholarship from another cultural context.

TEE—A Tool for Contextual Equipping of all God's People

Graham Aylett



Graham Aylett served with TEE in Mongolia for fourteen years, and then from 2013 with the Increase Association, and since March 2021 as General Secretary. He is Vice-Chair of the Trustees of SEAN International and a member of the Asia Theological Association's Commission on Accreditation and Educational Development.

David Burke



David Burke has served in educational and pastoral ministries in Australia and Southeast Asia since 1979. He is presently an adjunct teacher and research

1. Introduction: Increase Association participants at the OMF Theological Educators' Consultation

This reflection on the OMF Theological Educators' Consultation comes from members of the Increase Association (www.increaseassociation.org), an association connecting church-based training programmes around Asia, most of which use the methodology of *TEE—Theological Education by Extension*.

The designation *TEE* has been used to refer to a range of training methodologies, including lectures or intensive modules off-campus and evening classes offered on-campus. These have brought great benefit to many, and we would describe them as *seminary-based TEE*. By contrast, members of the Increase Association use TEE in a specific way to describe the three-fold combination of interactive *personal study*, leading to a *group meeting* led by a trained facilitator, moving to structured *practical application*.[1]

Five people connected with the Increase Association were invited to the consultation, all Increase Equippers, that is, people with long experience in TEE and/or relevant educational and theological experience who volunteer time each year to serve other members of the Association.

We came with the conviction that there was much to be gained from sharing and listening to others involved in the broad task of theological education—helping equip the people of God for the mission of God, from grass roots to scholarly levels and everything in between.

Different member organizations connected by the Increase Association offer training at different levels, some focusing on grass roots, others offering accredited BTh degrees, and still others an integrated pathway from foundations onwards. At the consultation, we were looking for points of connection with providers of education and training at different levels, conversations with church leaders, and had our eyes and ears open for the major issues that participants in different country contexts would raise.

We had many good and insightful individual conversations. But as we reflected on what we heard, it seemed that, while the consultation agreed that theological education was properly in the service of the church and covered the whole range of equipping needs for the people of God, most of the plenary discussion tended to centre around issues facing Bible colleges and seminaries.

Individual conversations developed exciting ways that TEE programs connected through the Increase Association could partner with Bible Colleges and Seminaries. We see possibilities for great synergy!

2. Contextual equipping of the people of God—TEE methods and translated courses

One of the themes discussed during the consultation was that of contextualisation. Here, we would like to focus on two aspects in relation to theological education. First, is the training content relevant? Does it connect with the concerns, anxieties, and issues that learners actually face? Does it effectively bring together the biblical text and the learners' contexts? Second, are the training methodologies appropriate for the learners? Do they at least begin with familiar patterns and methods of learning, even if seeking to develop a wider range of skills?

The TEE method—combining home study, regular group meetings, and practical application—provides training in the context of the learners' everyday life and ministry. TEE offers training for people where they live, work, and minister, leading to a greater integration of learning and living. Since group discussions focus on living out the truths learned in the

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Iljo de Keijzer



Iljo de Keijzer has been serving in the Philippines since 2005. She has been mainly involved in different types of training for the majority of church leaders who do not get to go to Bible school. She is the Preaching Movement Coordinator for Langham in the Philippines. She also collaborates with Increase and other like-minded organizations.

members' personal contexts, this way of training provides many opportunities for contextual learning in the local church.[2] Good facilitation and group discussion, enabling each individual to reflect on his or her own context, leads to what we could call "microcontextualisation".

To address the second aspect—Is the training methodology appropriate? Does it begin with familiar patterns and methods of learning? Foundation level TEE texts often use pictures with speech bubbles, and are laid out with plenty of white space on the page, with the aim of engaging learners who are not used to engaging with written texts.[3] Group discussion, although referring to the personal study text, is almost entirely oral learning. Learners can progress from basic courses to more advanced ones which call for a greater ability to engage with more complex written texts.

What about the source of TEE course materials? Initially, many TEE programs have taken TEE courses produced in other contexts and translated them, with varying degrees of adaptation and contextualisation. Well-known pitfalls lie before the unwary translator! Words that are a perfect dictionary translation into the target language might actually have a very different colloquial meaning. Some illustrations may need to be changed to be appropriate: a section written in a tropical country illustrating a Christian attitude by giving a cold drink to workers, when translated for a snow-filled country, will chanhge the beverage to hot tea! And some whole sections may not fit the new context: a long lesson showing that the Bible is the trustworthy word of God for people from one context might not be so necessary in a Catholic country like the Philippines. The challenge of effective translation is to find appropriate names, places, illustrations, and content that remain faithful to the intention of the author.

3. Contextual equipping of the people of God—new TEE courses written in and for the context

While it remains important to train people to do translation and contextualisation well, there is an even more profitable solution. One way to avoid insensitive or wrong translation and contextualisation would naturally be having local people write their own courses. Beginning in 2016, the Increase Association has worked to develop a program to train a new generation of TEE course writers.[4]

The program involved three workshops. Different Increase member organizations from various countries that were interested in developing new courses sent teams for training. These new course writers were already experienced in TEE and familiar with its ethos.

In the first workshop, held in March–April 2017, they were introduced to Situation Response Development (SRD).[5] This method starts with the learners and their context, rather than the writers and their content. Course writers are given tools for thorough research of the situation with regard to their topic as it is understood in their context. They ask questions on how people decide and create, what they do, feel, know, and believe about the chosen topic. They describe the current learners and their situation. And then they ask, "What would the situation look like if transformed by God's rule and reign?"[6]

In the second workshop, held in June 2017, participants brought the results of their community research and learned to put together a profile of their typical learners—age, education, skills, etc. From there, participants learned to dream about what a transformed learner would look like and what skills, tools, character development, and resources this transformed learner would need

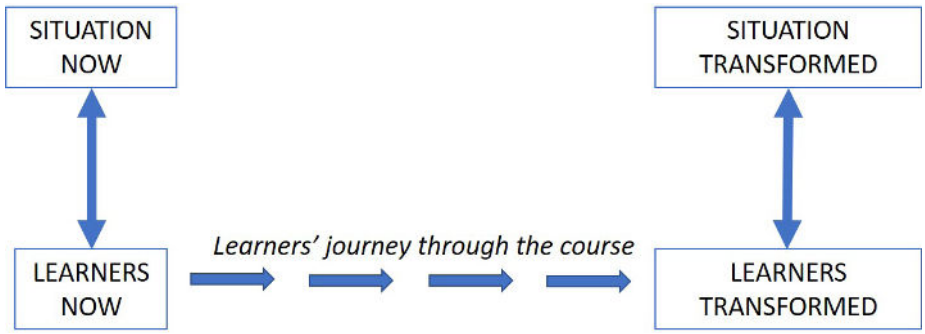

Fig. 1 Situation Response Development (SRD) as the framework for course writing

in order to become God's agent of transformation in their situation.

Using this framework, learning objectives were written, relevant case studies gathered, and practical assignments designed to help learners on the journey from their current state to a new place of fruitfulness. Over the next year, course developers worked on writing new lessons with help from mentors.[7]

The third workshop was held in June 2018 and focused on reviewing the course content, writing a group leaders manual, and layout and illustration.[8]

As a result of this initial training, TEE courses have been developed in context to cover areas such as Christian response to persecution (from Pakistan and Bangladesh), ministry to teens (Mongolia), the spirit world (Cambodia), and learning from Old Testament men and women of God (for believers from Central Asia). Others are on the way. These courses address a need noted during the theological educators' consultation for seminaries and churches to engage more deeply with social issues. This three-workshop sequence for a second cohort of course writers was rudely interrupted by the COVID pandemic. But this provided the stimulus for developing modular training resources that can be made available online, with potential for more widespread use.

4. Equipping the equippers—TEE programs and seminaries in synergistic partnership

As outlined above, TEE is a form of multi-level Christian training that is educationally sound and highly contextualised. This makes it a great tool to be used in the Lord's global mission of reconciling and renewing creation. God's mission is worthy of the best energies of the whole body of Christ and all its agencies. This includes the task of equipping the whole people of God as followers of the Lord and servants of his mission. For seminaries, this means *both* training future church leaders for their own direct ministries *and* preparing them to equip all the people of God for their various ministries.

The following material aims to show how seminary and TEE can work together in the service of the Lord's mission.[10] It starts with recognition of the important role that seminaries have in training gospel workers and that seminaries cannot do the whole work of training God's people alone. It also starts with recognition that the seminary program is typically overcrowded and that any suggestions for change need an elegant economy of scale and flexibility of form.

There are good reasons for including exposure to TEE in a seminary program. It enables the seminary to make better use of its resources and extend its reach. It helps equip seminary graduates for expanded kingdom usefulness as they become effective equippers of God's people. It helps lift the quality of TEE programs by putting them within the orbit of a seminary's resources and its quality assurance frameworks. It can also serve as a recruiting ground for future seminary students by providing an opportunity for people to "taste and see" before they uproot their lives and move to a campus for study. More importantly, exposure to TEE through a seminary serves the mission of the church by giving access to contextualised Christian education and ministry training for those on the front line of God's mission.

Ideally, exposure to TEE in a seminary context will include hands-on experience of TEE methodology as well as training in contextualised course writing as outlined above. Exposure to TEE methodology will include both participating in a TEE group led by someone else and leading a group. Such exposure to the methodology will equip seminarians to write TEE courses that are immediately usable. We have, then, three levels or phases of exposure to TEE: as a learner, as a group leader, and as a course writer.

How can this exposure be given in seminaries? The following give some possibilities that are meant to serve as starting ideas rather than as an exhaustive list.

1. TEE exposure as a stand-alone elective course[11]

A typical seminary course occupies twelve weeks of class time, with accompanying student work as assessment tasks. A course can be designed that has a mix of classroom learning and direct participation.

Classroom sessions can be used to set TEE in historical and theological perspective and to explain its educational methodology in the light of present educational theory. Class sessions can also explain elements of course writer training that have been outlined above.

Direct participation can be achieved by students enrolling in a TEE course, run by a local church, or run in the seminary. During the first half of the course, students can participate as learners, and then be introduced to group leadership, all under the eye of an experienced group leader. This participation can be enhanced by using the action-reflection cycle common in field education. Assessment of this direct participation can be through the student's self-assessment, combined with assessment by the group leader using a template designed with input by the seminary and the TEE provider.

The course writer element in TEE exposure can be developed through a mix of the above classroom sessions and production of a TEE lesson or lessons. That is, having been exposed to TEE as a learner and a group leader, and then introduced to the TEE course writing approach, students can be given the task of developing a TEE course outline and one complete lesson with a guide for group leaders and associated practical application relevant to their local context. It will not be reasonable to expect development of a full TEE course in a twelve-week period.

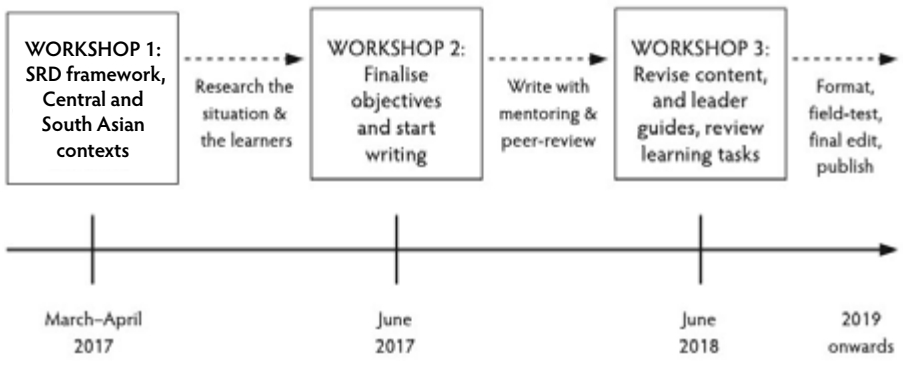

Fig. 2 The timeline of the first Increase course writer training[9]

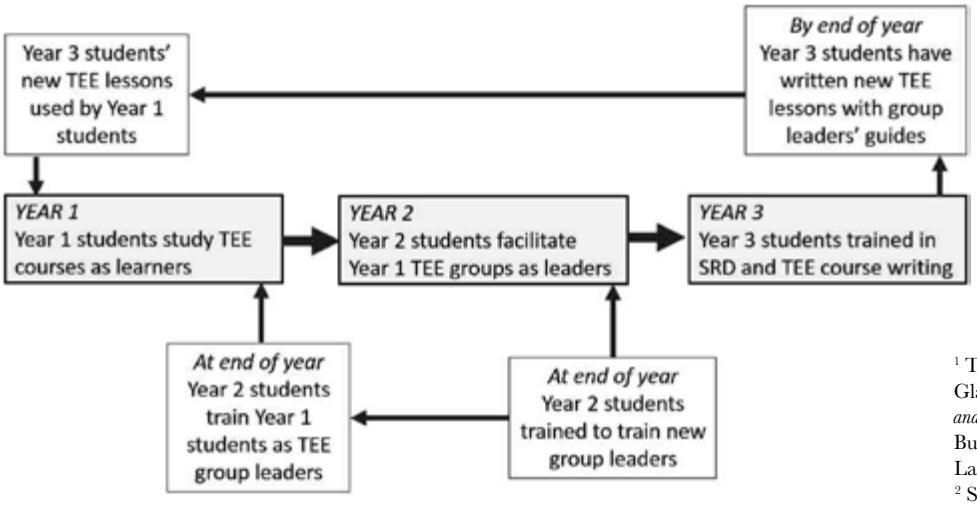

Fig. 3 Equipping seminary students with TEE tools over a three-year program

2. Mix and match over a seminary program

A typical seminary program stretches over three to four years and involves a mixture of classroom learning and various forms of field exposure.[12]

With a little creativity and flexibility, seminary students could gain a rich exposure to TEE through a staged and varied program. In Year One, students could participate as learners in a TEE course as part of their field experience, accompanied by the usual action-reflection process. In Year Two—again as part of their field experience (and perhaps linked to a classroom course on discipleship)—students could be trained as facilitators to lead a TEE group, reflect on their experience, and receive further training to become facilitator-trainers. In Year Three, students could be trained as TEE course writers with the major assessment task of developing locally-contextual TEE lessons to an advanced stage and minor assessments discussing TEE methodology and its fit to their context.

Ideally, seminary students would do all three elements in such a staged program, equipping them to include TEE in their toolbox as church leaders. That being said, the three elements could be separated such that some students simply do the learning phase, while others learn and lead, and others again learn, lead, and write.

Another possibility for the learner and leader phases of TEE exposure is that an existing TEE course could be used to replace an existing seminary course as currently taught.[13] For example, Book 6 of the SEAN *Life of Christ* compendium could be substituted for an existing classroom course on the book of Acts.[14] Students could participate as TEE learners in such a course. Going further, students who have completed the course could return the next year and serve as TEE group leaders for the next batch of students—all under seminary supervision.

3. TEE tasters

The Increase Association has developed a range of "TEE taster" sessions. One of these could be incorporated into a single seminary three-hour class in a course on disciple-making, Christian education, or something similar. Such tasters typically include an introduction to TEE as a useful tool in local church life and an introduction to TEE methodology. Those involved then participate as learners in a mini-TEE class, including time to complete the individual learning component of a TEE lesson, a typical TEE group discussion, and identification of a practical activity arising from the lesson. An important conclusion to such a taster held in a seminary context would be a time for students to reflect on and evaluate the experience.

5. Conclusion

In order to equip the whole people of God for the (highly contextual) mission of God, contextually appropriate methods addressing contextually relevant issues are vital. TEE offers tools that are being used around East Asia (and far more widely). Partnerships between TEE programs and seminaries hold great promise! A small effort to contact and build personal relationships with the local TEE body and the Increase Association should open access to a range of resources, including key people who can assist the seminary.[15]

We are so grateful to OMF for the invitation and the connections and conversations that have resulted. May they continue and deepen, bearing much fruit to the glory of God. **MRT**

[1] Tim Green and Graham Aylett, "TEE at a Glance," in *TEE for the 21st Century: Tools to Equip and Empower God's People for His Mission*, ed. David Burke, Richard Brown, and Qaiser Julius (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2021), 15.
[2] See Graham Aylett and David Samuel, "TEE in Theological Perspective – Part 2" in *TEE for the 21st Century*, 73–97, especially 79–84.
[3] See, for example, the sample lessons of SEAN International's basic course, *Abundant Life*, that can be accessed at https://www.seaninternational.org/courses-library/abundant-life (accessed 7 November 2022). SEAN is the acronym of Study by Extension for All Nations.
[4] For more discussion and further details, see Tim Green, "Creating Twenty-First Century TEE Courses," in *TEE in Asia: Empowering Churches, Equipping Disciples*, ed. Hanna-Ruth Van Wingerden, Tim Green, and Graham Aylett (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2021), 227–231, and, in more detail, Nicholas Ivins and Miyung Do, "New TEE Courses," in *TEE for the 21st Century*, 175–199.
[5] Nicholas Ivins, "Situational Response Development," With International Community, 7 September 2017, https://withcommunity.org/situational-response-development/ (accessed 21 December 2022).
[6] Ivins and Do, "New TEE Courses," 183–85.
[7] Ivins and Do, "New TEE Courses," 183–86.
[8] Ivins and Do, "New TEE Courses," 186.
[9] Figure 7.3 in Ivins and Do, "New TEE Courses," 183.
[10] For a wide-ranging discussion of how seminary and TEE can have collaborative partnerships, see Qaiser Julius, "TEE and Campus-Based Training in Partnership" in *TEE in Asia*, 269–93.
[11] This possibility is stimulated by a course proposal developed for the Asian Theological Seminary by Iljo de Keijzer. Ideally, such a course would be co-taught by a seminary teacher and someone experienced in TEE.
[12] Field exposure may take varied forms, including unstructured church experience, highly structured internship, secondment to a parachurch body, and such like. Ideally, it is assessed, subject to quality-assurance frameworks, and well-integrated into the seminary program. See David Burke, "Time to leave the Wilderness? The Teaching of Pastoral Theology in South East Asia," in *Tending the Seedbeds: Educational Perspectives on Theological Education in Asia*, ed. Allan Harkness (Quezon City, Philippines: ATA, 2010), 263–84.
[13] It is worth noting that ATA has given accreditation to some programs and courses delivered through TEE methodology. It would not be difficult to take the *Life of Christ* example suggested here and deliver it in a seminary in a way satisfying ATA requirements.
[14] See https://www.seaninternational.org/courses-library/life-of-christ-book-6 (accessed 21 December 2022).
[15] A good starting point is the Increase website: https://www.increaseassociation.org/. As well as linking seminaries to local TEE programmes, Increase offers a range of resources that can help collaboration with seminaries.

Theological Education that Impacts—On Whom/What? For Whom/What?

Allan Harkness



Allan Harkness and his wife Marven, from New Zealand, are retired OMF members. They served in Singapore from 1988 to 2015, and Allan has over thirty years of theological education experience in Asia. He was the Founding Dean of AGST Alliance and served on a number of Asia Theological Association seminary accreditation teams. Now a theological education consultant, he's an educator at heart who is fascinated by transformative learning, adult and theological education, and what educators bring to—and receive from—their educational roles. He has facilitated impact-based curriculum reviews in several seminaries. Allan may be contacted at allan.harkness@gmail.com.

In Majority World theological education (TE) over the past decade, significant attention has been given to impact: What impact do seminaries have on the churches and organisations to which they are linked (by virtue of their governance and where their graduates are serving) and in the wider society in which they are situated? (In this article I use "seminary" to refer generically to the wide range of theological and Bible colleges and schools that have pastoral formation as their primary focus – what is needed to form those being trained with the appropriate blend of qualities to enable them to minister effectively within their own culture and/or in cross-cultural settings.)

For evangelical seminaries, this impact theme was reflected at the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) consultation in Turkey in 2015, where the consultation theme was Engaged and Effective—The Impact of Theological Education.

At ICETE 2015 the outcomes of a project in which ten Majority World seminaries undertook an impact-based curriculum review process were presented. Findings of the project are published in Is It Working? Researching Context to Improve Curriculum *(Brooking 2018). Since then, there has been a ripple effect as other seminaries have been encouraged to undertake an impact-based review process, and to modify their curriculum based on their discoveries.*[1]

The COVID-19 pandemic, socio-political and economic crises, and other developments in many Majority World countries have driven seminaries to take stock and to engage in a re-calibrating, even re-imagining, process like mission organisations—that invest significant resources in this direction—are undertaking.

If "impact" is the goal of TE ventures, then what might impact look like? More specifically, how does impact relate to:

- The direction and dimensions of the TE content? In Christian discipleship and formation, "direction" relates to focus towards God, others, self, and the natural creation. "Dimensions" relate to how people and their organisations or institutions are encouraged to respond "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30, NRSV).

- The curriculum processes adopted in the seminary?

- What we perceive the end results of our efforts to be?

These questions may be explored with three increasingly focused perspectives, analogous to seeing a distant feature in a landscape, perhaps a distinctive tree or structure, and making our way towards seeing it close up:

1. We start by looking at the feature *panoramically*—from afar—which gives us the big picture in which the feature is set, its overall context. For seminaries, this panorama is the broad context of God's creation and kingdom, and within which any activity—theological education or otherwise—is situated.

2. Moving nearer, we get a *middle-distance* view of the feature and see it set in its closer topography. Perhaps it's on a small hill or beside a stream. For seminaries, this middle-distance view relates to the focus and purpose of TE as a discipline generally, as a vehicle for partnering with God in achieving his purposes for his creation and his kingdom.

3. We arrive right beside the feature and are able to have a *close-up* view of it. We can now note in detail how it's constructed and what it's used for, what's unique and distinctive about it. For any seminary, the close-up view entails examining and reviewing, affirming and constructively critiquing what is specific to *this* seminary's purpose, role, and processes.

We will explore these three perspectives in further detail.

The panoramic view: What sort of mission and vision?

Any theological education activity needs to be set in the broad, big-picture context of God's kingdom, God's activity in his creation, and our participation with God in his purposes and plans. This is a missional-ecclesial perspective and it has clear implications for TE.

> A missional-ecclesial foundation for theological education suggests that our schools exist in order *to prepare men and women who are capable of guiding the church to be effective in fulfilling the mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord throughout the earth*. Note that the preparation of men and women is not the ultimate goal, but a significant means towards the accomplishment of the greater goal of seeing empowered churches which significantly impact their communities, such that the marks of the kingdom of God are evident in the world.[2]

Note the "big picture" impact emphasised in this quotation. Note, too, how this resonates with the mission and vision of many organisations. For example, the mission and vision of OMF is as follows:

> *Our Mission:* We share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness with East Asia's peoples to the glory of God.
> *Our Vision:* Through God's grace we aim to see an indigenous biblical church movement in each people group of East Asia, evangelizing their own people and reaching out in mission to other peoples.

Our mission is what we *do* as we hope to *see* what is stated in our vision fulfilled. In short, the panoramic view recognises that when we pray "your kingdom come, your will be done" (Matt 6:10), the scope encompasses the whole of life, existence, and experience.

Emphasis on the participation of God's people in God's mission has been picked up by theologians and missiologists alike. For example, think of classics like David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*, Chris Wright's *The Mission of God*, and the literature spawned since they appeared.[3] In recent decades, the discourse on TE has advocated the application of this emphasis, seen in the writings of commentators like Robert Banks, Linda Cannell, and Bernhard Ott.[4]

What does a *missional-ecclesial vision* for TE mean? We can start to unlock this by considering these key panoramic questions:

- What is our understanding of God's mission—especially in our part of his world at this time in "his-story"?
- How do we know God's mission is being achieved?
- What are the challenges faced for this mission to be accomplished?
- What is the church's role in this mission?
- What sort of men and women does the church need so that it can fulfil its missional mandate?

As we process these questions, it is helpful to think about the foundations upon which our responses are built and the underlying assumptions we bring to our answers. Robust and fruitful discussion may well result if our colleagues in TE come to the questions with different perspectives and assumptions.

Answers to these panoramic questions set us up for the second perspective to consider, relating more specifically to impact in any TE venture we may be in partnership with—but still a little removed from the actual detail of the life of that venture.

The middle-distance view: What impact are we seeking in TE?

Educational accountability embedded within the European *Bologna Process* over the past two decades[5] has emphasised "fitness of purpose" and "fitness for purpose," foci that are influencing educational programs around the world, including TE programs.

Fitness *of* purpose is the extent to which the mission and/or goals—*raison d'etre*—of an organisation or institution are suitable and appropriate for the institution's context. In the TE context, we will ask: is our seminary vision/mission statement a good fit for what we sense God is calling us to?

- Fitness *for* purpose is the extent to which the processes/systems of an organisation or institution are suitable and appropriate for the organisation to fulfil its vision/mission. So, we will ask: how effective are our seminary's processes and curricula for achieving our vision/mission statement?

- Most seminaries have mission and vision statements. To ensure fitness *of* purpose, these statements may need to be reviewed for their continuing relevance in a seminary's "here and now," in the light of the agreed understanding of the panoramic perspective above. Once (re-)affirmed, those statements become foundational, as the seminary constructs its various processes to be genuinely fit *for* purpose—to ensure the mission and vision is being fulfilled. It is here that consideration of impact plays a crucial role: where does the impact the seminary is seeking to have lie?

Rupen Das[6] has drawn on the Kellogg logic model for community development initiatives[7] to suggest a four-phase process for understanding impact in TE. This logic chain is summarised in Figure 1.

1. The seminary plans *activities*—classes, field education, personal study time, chapels, pastoral care groups, etc. This is the curriculum in its broader sense of being the intentional learning experiences planned by a seminary for its students rather than simply the subject matter of education (often termed the syllabus).

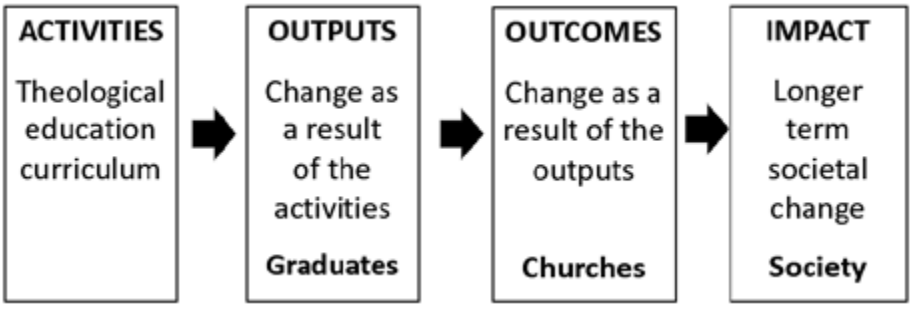

Fig. 1 The Kellogg logic model adapted to theological education.[8]



Campus cleaning as part of spiritual formation

A range of resources (or inputs) are necessary to serve this activity—human, financial, administrative, and technological resources from both inside and outside the seminary.

2. As a result of the activities, change is expected in the students as they go through their time in the seminary, and certainly evident by the time they graduate. This change is *outputs*—direct products of the activities. What sort of outputs are these, both qualitatively and quantitatively? A graduate profile is designed to detail what is expected ideally, and graduate documentation (transcripts and statements of achievement or character) will try to enunciate achievement of outputs.

3. The seminary's graduates move into churches and organisations. *Outcomes* are seen in changes in the direction and dimensions of ministry and mission in and by those churches and organisations as they are influenced by the seminary graduates serving there. Key issues are the extent to which these outcomes are consistent with the vision held by those churches and organisations, and whether the sort of seminary graduates who come to serve are helping or hindering the achievement of the vision.

4. The churches and organisations within which a seminary's graduates serve are set within societies and communities, with the mandate to "celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope."[9] So, what *impact* do the churches and organisations have in these societies and communities? How are the communities different because of the presence of Christian people and Christian churches or organisations?

It's the impact phase that is crucial to consider for the middle-distance view of what TE is seeking to achieve with the panoramic perspective in mind. Recall the quotation above:

> Note that the preparation of men and women is not the ultimate goal, but a significant means towards the accomplishment of the greater goal of seeing empowered churches which significantly impact their communities, such that the marks of the kingdom of God are evident in the world.

Similar can be said for any organisation. OMF, for example, seeks people who can be a significant means of ensuring the development of an indigenous biblical church movement involved in evangelisation and reaching out in mission.

Thus, in Majority World TE, to ensure fitness for purpose, the key question for seminaries to ask will follow this logic chain:

To what extent does our society (or do our local communities) reflect God's kingdom values and perspectives
… because there are communities of God's people (churches) in that society
… who are served by students and graduates of our seminary
… whom we have been responsible (and privileged) to relate to and equip during the part of their life journey that they have been with us?

This is rather different from, and more expansive than, a typical "end point" educational focus on graduates themselves for determining TE focus and effectiveness.

The close-up view: What is "impact" for my specific seminary?

It's at this point that we can consider how an impact focus works out in individual seminaries. Mission agencies may place their focus on the ones they, in one capacity or another, partner with because of the resonance of perspective between the seminary's and agency's missional visions.

It may be argued that "theological seminaries are the most important institution in the Church, bar none. They are the repositories of our past and the shapers of our future."[10] A focus on impact by seminaries, described in the four-phase process above, will better ensure seminaries are "shaping the future" by equipping the churches and organisations they serve to be (re-)aligned to God's purposes in their unique time and place.

This is about a seminary (re-)assessing its fitness *for* purpose—and perhaps even revisiting its mission and vision statements—to ensure fitness *of* purpose in its curriculum processes and content. Such (re-)assessments can be challenging, but ultimately productive and confidence-building.

Commitment to impact will present a range of elements for seminaries to consider. These elements are likely to include, *inter alia*:

- Interacting with the seminary's stakeholders—those with a vested interest in the effectiveness of the seminary—to ensure their voices are heard in an impact-based review, and consensus is sought for the way ahead.

- Seeking insights from key informants in the surrounding communities is likely to be valuable, even if what they say is perhaps painful to hear (e.g., if they indicate that the presence of the seminary is irrelevant to their community).

- Recognising that an impact-based seminary focus requires dynamic rather than static transformative processes. What sort of transformative processes are required in the seminary, and how will those be facilitated? Seminary leadership plays a crucial role in guiding these processes.[11]

- Considering how the many varied elements of the seminary's life interrelate, for an integrated process in which impact is integral to the seminary's "DNA." Integration recognises that the formal, non-formal, and informal aspects of seminary life may all contribute synergistically to the process.[12]

- Revisiting the content of the curriculum, to ensure that it is contextualised for the unique opportunities and challenges each seminary faces. Involving key stakeholders and community informants will doubtless enrich any curriculum review exercise.

- Reshaping graduate profiles through impact-based lenses. Usually, such profiles focus on individual formation and development, to ensure more faithful disciples and disciple-makers. But that focus doesn't have sufficient reach for impact-oriented profiles.

- Enriching the faculty as a key asset for their seminary adopting an impact focus. Faculty members are strategic change agents in any seminary, and more so if impact-oriented recalibration is undertaken. What sort of faculty is needed? What vocational competence do they need? What can be intentionally planned to help them become more competent? Consistent faculty equipping pays dividends, even though it is not an easy task.[13]

With a panoramic vision and impact-based perspective as a foundation for achieving that vision, a seminary has a plumb line against which its leaders can assess where to put or re-direct their focus and energies. They are a standard by which to assess what is being accomplished as "the nuts and bolts" of its life and activity are reshaped by means of the elements noted above.

This article has advocated that theological education should be designed and carried out for impact. Majority World seminaries should therefore adopt an impact-based approach to setting and navigating their direction as they seek to equip faithful women and men to lead God's people as they partner with him in his mission and the fulfilment of his purposes—all for his glory. What better partnerships could we be in? **MRT**

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[1] Allan Harkness, "Faculty Enrichment for Impact: A Schema for Holistic Faculty Development," *InSights Journal for Global Theological Education* 7, no. 2 (2022): 37, https://insightsjournal.org/faculty-enrichment-for-impact-a-schema-for-holistic-faculty-development/ (accessed 19 December 2022). For the findings of the project cited, see Stuart Brooking, ed., *Is It Working? Researching Context to Improve Curriculum: A Resource Book for Theological Schools* (Carlisle: Langham, 2018).

[2] Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle: Langham, 2022), 31. Italics original.

[3] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993) and Chris Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Nottingham and Downers Grove: IVP, 2006).

[4] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: EDCOT, 2006); and Bernhard Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham, 2016).

[5] "The Bologna Process [started in 1999] seeks to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe. It established the European Higher Education Area to facilitate student and staff mobility, to make higher education more inclusive and accessible, and to make higher education in Europe more attractive and competitive worldwide." https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/bologna-process/ (accessed 3 November 2022).

[6] Rupen Das, *Connecting Curriculum with Context: A Handbook for Context Relevant Curriculum Development in Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham, 2015).

[7] WK Kellogg Foundation, *WK Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide* (Battle Creek, MI: WK Kellogg Foundation, 2014).

[8] Adapted from Das, *Connecting Curriculum with Context*, 41. The definitions of "activities," "outputs," "outcomes," and "impact" used here may be somewhat different to uses of the terms, both generally and educationally, readers are familiar with.

[9] United Church of Canada, "A New Creed (1968)," https://united-church.ca/community-faith/welcome-united-church-canada/faith-statements/new-creed-1968 (accessed 7 November 2022).

[10] Doug Birdsall, quoted in "Leaders to Focus on the State of Theological Education," 29 May 2012, http://www.lausanne.org/news-releases/lausanne-movement-convenes-global-gathering-of-seminary-presidents (accessed 4 November 2022).

[11] For further discussion on this, see Allan Harkness, "The Role of Academic Leadership in Designing Transformative Teaching and Learning," in *Leadership in Theological Education, Vol. 2: Foundations for Curriculum Design*, ed. Fritz Deininger and Orbelina Eguizabal (Carlisle: Langham, 2017), 135–75.

[12] "*Formal* modes of learning use structured and institutionalised settings (e.g. classrooms, workshops, and seminars). *Non-formal* modes of learning are those which are intentional, but which take place in non-institutional settings (e.g. field work and visits, camps, and retreats). Learning can also arise from *informal* modes when spontaneous or coincidental opportunities in the course of life are utilised, e.g. drawing learning from an accident or illness, watching children play, cross-cultural experiences, or an unplanned D&M ('deep and meaningful' conversation) with a peer in the seminary dining room or after corporate worship." Harkness, "The Role of Academic Leadership," 144. The theme of the 2022 ICETE Consultation was "Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education: Beyond Dialogue."

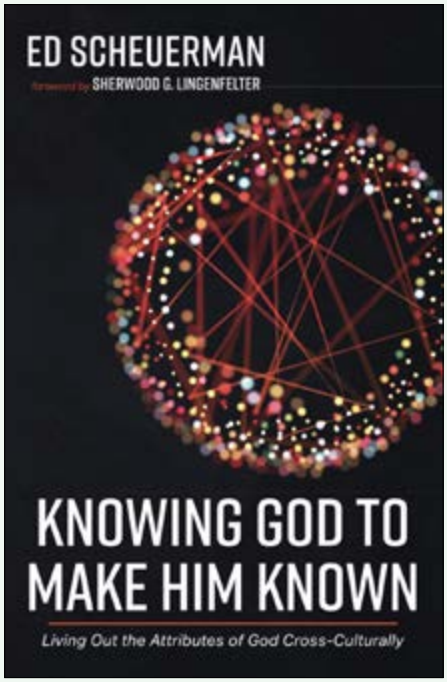
[13] AGST Alliance (mainland SE Asia) launched its Faculty Enrichment Initiative (FEI) in 2022, providing customised, contextualised, and bite-sized learning pathways for vocational enrichment of Asian seminary faculty, www.agstalliance.org/fei. For further insights on faculty enrichment for impact and domains of competence for seminary faculty, see Harkness, "Faculty Enrichment for Impact," 37–58.



Knowing God to Make Him Known: Living Out the Attributes of God Cross-Culturally

By Ed Scheuerman. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. ISBN 978-1-6667-0021-3. 133pp.

Reviewed by Sandy Graham



This concise overview of the stages involved in a cross-cultural journey—from calling to leaving the field—partnered with the attributes of God is the perfect read for someone considering missions or someone at any point in the journey. Dr. Ed, as his students call him, is clearly qualified to speak to those embarking on a cross-cultural adventure. He and his wife Carol, along with their daughters, served in East Asia for twenty-three years. Currently, he is the Director of Intercultural Studies at Lancaster Bible College and spends his time investing in the lives of the next generation of cross-cultural workers.

In Christian circles, we are often told that before we can *do* we need to *be*; however, the author wisely points out that before we can *be*, we need to *know*. By helping readers understand the attributes of God, the book leads us to discover more about God so that we can better reflect him to the world. Only then can we *be* all we are meant to be and *do* the things he has called us to do.

The content is organized to take us through the journey of cross-cultural ministry. Each step is partnered with one of the relevant attributes of God and each chapter concludes with some practical and thought-provoking questions that can be used to more fully process each step. Scheuerman shows us how a better understanding of God will allow us to more effectively glorify God's name among the people he has called us to serve.

The first three chapters focus on what happens before one goes to the field. The call to cross-cultural ministry comes in the context of God's sovereignty and our need to surrender to him. The next step is preparation for cross-cultural ministry. After receiving a call, many determine to jump right in and go. Scheuerman, however, reminds us that God calls us first to a life of holiness not activity. Finally, as the author talks about living in two worlds, we are reminded of God's omnipresence. When the time of preparation seems to drag on, it is good to remind ourselves that God is present in the here and now while we prepare and he will be there when we arrive on the field. What a comfort!

Part 2 focuses on departure and entry. As departure can be one of the toughest times in the journey of a cross-cultural worker, the author's focus on the attribute of God's faithfulness anchors us in the important truth that there is someone we can count on. In times of uncertainty, God's faithfulness is sure. Upon entering a new country, many workers are faced with culture shock and stress. Yet, when we remember that God does not change—he is the same yesterday, today, and forever—we can embrace the things causing our stress and rest in our identity in Christ.

Another part of the journey requires us to adjust to a team—a team that may include people from yet another culture. This is where we need to focus on grace—both giving grace and receiving grace. The book asks, "How many times a day am I willing to die to myself?" and encourages us that at such times we should model God's grace to others. Another adjustment will be to the host culture. This is where we need to remember God's mercy. Thankfully, God doesn't treat us the way we deserve, but rather extends his mercy to us. This, in turn, encourages us to show mercy and thus brings glory to God.

The next section focuses on field ministry, which involves connecting with people. God's wisdom is the key attribute here—not just knowledge, but knowing what to do with the knowledge God gives us. Another aspect of field ministry is serving others. The author points out three practical attributes of God that are quite useful as we serve. These include love, justice, and mercy. He also touches on church planting, encouraging us to look to God's power, and reflects on church multiplication, providing insight into the fact that God is infinite.

This guide would not be complete without a look at the aspects of returning from the field. Leaving the field can be traumatic and goodbyes can be painful. The author reminds us that we can lean on God and his goodness during times of transition. The final section includes thoughts on sabbath and debriefing, relating these to the attributes of God being eternal as well as omniscient.

No matter where you find yourself on the journey as a cross-cultural worker, the book will help and challenge you to seek God earnestly so that he can reveal himself to you and allow you, in turn, to reveal him to those who come across your path.