

Guest Editorial

Theological Education and Mission

Gloria S. Tseng

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“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

“Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children...” (Deuteronomy 4:9).

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20).

An “educational mandate” permeates the Old and the New Testaments. The people of God are called to make him known—to all people in general, and to their children in particular—by instruction. The means of Jesus’s announcement of God’s kingdom in Roman-occupied Palestine was instruction, in clear contrast to the Roman kingdom, which had been birthed in military conquest. Institutions of theological education play an important role in equipping the people of God to carry out the educational mandate. The articles in this *Global Missiology - English* theme issue on “Theological Education and Mission” examine specific aspects of theological education in a variety of cultural contexts.

“A Giant on Clay Legs” by Christopher Howles considers the challenges faced by institutions of theological education in Africa and argues for a missiocentric paradigm of theological training. “The Role of Formal Theological Education in Missiological Strategies in Honor-Shame Contexts” by Anna Daub explores the cultural component in equipping church elders or overseers to teach in a mission field and calls for a more nuanced understanding of the role of formal theological education in leadership development. “Prophets in the Seminary” by Matthew Hirt examines several Protestant views of the role of prophets in the church based on Ephesians 4:11, as understood and interpreted by believers of New Apostolic Reformation, traditional Pentecostal, and evangelical theological perspectives. He argues that the prophetic function, when properly understood, is essential for institutions of theological education. “Rethinking Reproducibility” by Phil Barnes and Will Brooks critiques the reproducibility model of theological education in mission fields and argues for theological education that develops theological aptitude, a servant attitude, and missional awareness in its students. “Strengthening Spiritual Reconciliation through Theological Education” by Omar Palafox makes a case for collaboration Latinx Catholics, Hispanic Catholics, Pentecostals, and non-Pentecostal Protestants in theological education rooted in community so as to provide “soul-forming education” that results in reconciliation.

While the contexts and dimensions of theological education examined by the authors vary, one sees a consensus emerge, namely, discipleship and spiritual formation for emerging church leaders in the setting of an academic institution. How does one bring about profound and often hidden individual life changes in institutions of higher learning? Are institutions of higher learning

effective instruments in bringing out, or at least setting in motion, spiritual maturity, which takes place over the course of a lifetime in community with the people in one's life, and requires as much mentoring as, if not more than, scholarship? Two things come to mind at the time of the writing of this editorial. First, according to all observers—including the eyewitness accounts carried in this issue—the recent Ashbury revival took place spontaneously; and, this spontaneity required the institution's leaders and administrators to set aside its “normal functioning” to make room for what the students were experiencing. What is the relationship between the education provided by Ashbury and the students' recent spiritual experiences? Second, what is and should be the role of institutions of theological education in North America and Europe, and leadership development for churches in the majority world? The articles in this issue address in one way or another the relationship between formal theological training and spiritual formation and the applicability or adaptability of such training based on the North American and European model in mission fields and non-Western cultures. It is the hope of the editorial team that the current issue may serve the function of “throwing out a brick to entice others to contribute their jade.”¹ May the modest offerings of this issue lead to a meaningful and robust conversation on the educational mandate of the people of God.

¹ 抛磚引玉 (*paozhuan yinyu*)—a metaphor for contributing something modest in the hope of encouraging others to contribute something more valuable.