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**Reflections on  
Theological Education**

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**Introduction**

Every educational endeavour has some distinctive and undergirding philosophy upon which it is based. It is this distinctive that sets it apart from the others. Such is the case with theological education. We in theological education feel that there is something in our field that sets us apart from the rest. What are the distinctives? Or, to put it another way: What is it that makes "theological education," theological education? After pursuing theological education for over four years, I have given thought to this question as it relates to what theological education *must* do.

**Proficiency**

Firstly, theological education must make the student intellectually proficient. By this I mean that our minds and thinking capacities must be expanded and widened as we pursue theological education. As theological students we must be able to examine the issues critically and see what is really at stake; what is central and what is peripheral.

Intellectual proficiency means being able to present well thought-out and well reasoned positions on the pertinent issues. The Bible is clear that we are called to use our minds. In a culture that is high on subjectivism, in

general, and experience, in particular, those of us in theological education must be the ones who will step back from personal involvement and present truthful, objective, and well reasoned arguments on the issues involved.

At another level, intellectual proficiency is what is needed to respond to heresies within the Church and attacks from without. In many of our churches emotionalism has been equated with true spirituality and reasoning with spiritual coldness. Additionally, experience has become the measure of most, if not all, things. Against this, we who pursue theological education must be the ones to correct heresies and provide the Biblical position.

This can only be used correctly if we are intellectually proficient. From outside the church come the attacks from the self-appointed philosophers of the day. Materialism, relativism, individualism, scepticism, and secular humanism have all been presented at the best way to go in this time. Where are the Christian thinkers of our day who are going to respond and chart a new course? Where will they come from? They must come from among us, from we who are involved in theological education. However, we can only accomplish this task if we are intellectually proficient.

### **Competence**

Secondly, theological education must make us ministerially competent. Ministerial competence speaks of effectively serving the needs of those in our churches and our communities. It means being able to listen to them and to answer their existential questions. Ministerial competence means more than just saying "Don't Worry" or "Jesus is the Answer." Ministerial competence means finding out what is the question. Yes, Jesus is the answer, but what is the question? *How* is Jesus the answer in their particular situation? Theological education must prepare us to answer that question. That which is gained in the classroom and in the library must be transferred to the churches, the classrooms and the counselling rooms in which we will serve.

When we leave seminary we must be able to help the mother who has just seen her son gunned down and does not understand why. We must be able to say something to the woman in the ghetto who has six children for six different men and none is providing support. These things are all involved in ministerial competence for they all have to do with serving others. Our

theological education must take us beyond the sheltered walls of the classroom and the library. If our theological education does not do that, then it needs to be re-thought. Our theological education must involve a theology of ministry.

### **Eminence**

Finally, theological education must make us spiritually eminent. Whereas intellectual proficiency has to do with our heads and ministerial competence has to do with our hands, spiritual eminence has to do with our hearts. Or, to change the analogy, whereas intellect relates to what we know and think, and ministry to what we do, spirituality has to do with who we are. There are many instances of people who developed full heads and empty hearts, or, to put it another way, hot heads and cold hearts. However, we are called to have cool heads and warm hearts. Spiritual eminence means that our theological education must draw us closer to God. It means that our relationship with God must deepen as our knowledge about Him increases. Spiritual eminence means that our knowledge about God must be translated into knowledge of God.

It is spiritual eminence that provides the love and power that is so vital for an effective ministry. It is spiritual eminence that will protect us from pride and arrogance, two of the theological students' most present temptations. If our theological education does not result in spiritual eminence, "education" is may be, but "theological education" it most certainly is not.