

Character matters: theological education and formation for wisdom.

Gordon T. Smith, Ph.D. (Rev) (Nov 01 - Evening Plenary session)

With upright heart he tended them, and guided them with skillful hand. (Psalm 78:72, NRSV)

Introduction: competence matters; character matters.

A. A Vision for the Mature Christian Life: The Essential Elements.

1. To know and live the truth: wisdom. Sapiential holiness.
2. To know one's calling and to fulfill it with courage and "balance." Vocational holiness.
 - 2.1. To know oneself and to accept self – humility (not wish you were anyone else).
 - 2.2. To have the courage to do what one is being called to do.
 - 2.3. To discern what one is not being called do to . . .the capacity to say "no".
 - 2.4. To observe sabbath – rest and distance and quiet and prayer.
 - 2.5. Perseverance and patience in the face of setback, suffering and persecution (vocational holiness is marked by the cross).

The grace we seek: "the contemplative in action."

3. To love and be loved, within community. Social holiness.
 1. Radical hospitality (in particular, to listen to the other).
 2. Service (includes faithfulness and dependability).
 3. To live in harmony with the other – a harmony marked by justice (i.e. truth/wisdom).
To forgive as we are forgiven (not cheap forgiveness, but with justice - not vengeance)
To accept with grace those who differ with us on fundamental matters.
4. The ordering of the affections. Emotional holiness.
 - 4.1. The transformation of our deep desires, passions and loves.
 - 4.2. The evidence: joy!

B. To Be in Christ.

1. It is a response to Christ and to the work and love of Christ shown to us.
2. It is a formation and transformation into the image of Christ (Rom 8:18-29) – it is to grow up into him who is our "head."
3. It is to abide in Christ as Christ abides in us (John 15) . . . clearly the capstone of Jesus teaching about his relationship with his disciples. [I no longer call you servants but friends]
4. It is a life lived towards the glory and reign of Christ – (rather than self): a deep love of service for Christ.

Note: this is true humility – the humility of being in Christ (not just for or with, but *in*).

Note: the importance of teaching prayer (as the means by which our relationship with Christ is sustained).

All made possible through the ministry of the Spirit.

C. The Practices that Enable Character Development (with particular reference to formation in wisdom).

1. What is possible within the context of a theological school and its programs – over two, three or four years?

1.1. we can start students on a the path

1.2. we can affirm the formative capacity of an academic community.

1.3. essential: a clear articulation of a Christocentric vision for the mature Christian life.

1.4. suggestion: affirm one dimension of the Christian life each year for focus (as a kind of case study).

2. The Foci or Practices that enable formation.

2.1. the classroom itself; and the academic processes: teaching with this vision of the Christian life in mind.

2.2. good conversation (the particular value of small groups).

2.3. practice: applying what is being learned (but not prematurely!).

2.4. worship/prayer as the necessarily complement to the classroom (each informs the other).

3. The Environment

3.1. The example of the faculty and the administration – do they take this seriously?
Faculty retreat is not merely professional development.

3.2. The value of sacred spaces.

Conclusion

The Renewing of the Mind: Academics as Spiritual Formation

Gordon T. Smith, Ph.D. (Rev) (Nov 02 - Morning Plenary session)

A. Academic Study and Spiritual Formation.

B. Academics as the Necessary complement to prayer, worship and spiritual direction.

1. Worship and prayer must be grounded in a biblical theology.
2. Pastoral care and spiritual direction need to be informed by a biblical theology of the Spirit.

Side note: similar principle – evangelism and mission rooted in a biblical theology of mission/evangelism.

Also: study and academics is informed by the chapel/worship and prayer.

C. Academics AS Spiritual Formation.

1. Taking the mind seriously.
2. Taking *discipline* of the mind seriously.
3. It is about taking *teaching* seriously,
4. It means that we take scholarship seriously.

D. Teaching Ministry Practices as Spiritual Formation.

1. Empowered and enabled for our vocations and thus for vocational holiness.
2. We learn by doing; and doing informs understanding.
3. Learning to partner with others (a key element of social holiness)

E. Classroom Practices: Towards Transformation.

1. Passion – engaging heart and mind.
2. Quality and depth over against quantity.
3. Attention to the space in which our teaching happens – space matters (embodied souls).
4. We care – compassion – about and for the student. They matter to us – and we respect their journey and where they are in their own growth in understanding and wisdom. Yes: we love our students.

F. The Teachers (why we give primary attention to the recruitment and development of faculty).

1. Wisdom and spiritual maturity.
2. A fundamental kindness and generosity: they care about students.
3. Passion for their discipline – and they approach their discipline with passion and conviction.
4. People of community: the faculty (and staff) as a whole are a living embodiment of the call to live in unity – to love each other in Christ.

Conclusion: it begins with those who are in administrative leadership (we demonstrate the integration of heart and mind; the partnership of scholarship with worship).

The Ordering of the Affections: From Worship to Education to Worship.

Gordon T. Smith, Ph.D. (Rev) (Nov 02 - Evening Plenary session)

Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace.

*Let Thy Goodness, as a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it – Seal it for thy courts above.*

2 Cor 3:18 “*And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.*”

1. The Ordering of the Affections.

- The significance of the affections for the spiritual life.
- The priority of joy in our Christian experience.
- Finding joy in Christ – in the giver rather than the gift.
- Humility and freedom from inordinate desires.

2. The Formative Potential of the Liturgy.

- Liturgy and spiritual formation (discipleship).
- Liturgy and the ordering of the affections: bringing us, together, into a world-view.
- Liturgy as routine (ritual); and the incremental work of the Spirit.
- Liturgy as participatory activity.

3. Worship and Emotion.

The power of emotion and the need for discernment. The danger: that the liturgy is nothing but “good feelings” (True worship cultivates faith, hope and love.

- 3.1. The need for emotional honesty.
- 3.2. The rejection of emotional manipulation.
- 3.3. The need for theologically informed emotional experience.

4. Factors that Shape this vision for the ordering of the Affections.

- 4.1. Preaching that fosters faith, hope and love – in Christ; connecting heart and mind.
- 4.2. Music that enables us to worship with heart and mind.

- (1) Avoid infantilizing; assume adult worshipers;
- (2) acknowledge the whole range of human emotion;
- (3) Use song and hymnody for the transition times of the liturgy;
- (4) comfort us *and* stretch us;
- (5) there is no need to fill the silence.

- 4.3. The classroom as the necessary complement to the chapel.
- 4.4. The potential of the arts to inform study, worship and common life.

5. The Real-Time Presence of the Ascended Christ: in prayer and in worship.

Spiritual Formation in the Classroom

Dr Marilyn Naidoo (17.30, Room 2)

Abstract: What students learn plays an important part in determining the kinds of people that they become. Theological students must be exposed to a wide variety of issues and perspectives, a combination of critical thinking and reflection on practice and a sustained look at themselves, their values and beliefs. All throughout the course of theological study students should be thinking about and nurturing their beliefs and faith commitments.

In the classroom spiritual formation will not be explicit agenda of many of the courses because it is approached more easily indirectly than directly. But in certain ways even the predominant mood, the learning climate and the relationship between teachers and students in any theological course contribute to the overall spiritual formation process. Therefore attention should be given also to the unconscious factors which effect trust and mistrust, openness or closeness, deep personal involvement or shallow dilettantism in a classroom setting. Most important for spiritual learning is a participatory leaning style which allows the direct and full involvement of students in the learning process.

To promote spiritual development the curriculum must be holistic and integrative. Educators keep calling for educational integration and in theological education, for integrating faith with learning. The changing world in which theological institutions exist has put market pressures on the curriculum to do more with less. The presence of women, racial/ethnic and international students and the effects of globalisation has altered the context and even the content of the curriculum in many theological institutions. In light of these changes, theological institutions need to re evaluate themselves in terms of spiritual formation, the curriculum and preparation for church leadership. Institutions cannot operate as though nothing has changed.

1. A vision for Spiritual Formation

2. Pedagogical Assumptions

- Theological scholarship
- Personal, relational & transformational knowledge
- Development theories and Identity formation

3. Curriculum

- Explicit, Hidden & Null curriculum
- Integration of the curriculum – locus of integration
- Pressures – market pressures, cultural diversity, globalisation, accreditation

4. Varied Learning Styles

5. Educator

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”Teach Us to Pray”: Attending to a Vital Dimension of Pastoral Formation

Gordon T. Smith (17.30, Room 1)

- A. If Prayer is so important, then Teaching Prayer is vitally important.
 - 1. Prayer and Christian experience
 - 2. Prayer and the Christian Ministry

- B. Teaching Prayer is Like Teaching Someone to drive the Automobile.
 - 1. Some things can only be learned by doing them.
 - 2. The need for diverse approaches to learning within the curriculum.

- C. An Introduction to One such approach to teaching prayer.
 - 1. The continuing value and relevance of the Ignatian tradition (for Christians today)
 - 2. The marks of this ‘tradition’ – the priority of intentionality; the need for discernment; the place of the affections; holy indifference.
 - 3. Most notable: the ‘real time’ encounter with the Ascended Christ (the transforming presence).

- D. Teaching Prayer: Cultivating the art of solitude and silence.

Resources

Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Life Together*.
Ignatius Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises* (various translations and publications)
Gordon T. Smith. *A Day with the Lord* (Regent College, 2004)
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The Job of the Theological Tutor: Shifting models, Spiritual Formation and a Conversation with Henri Nouwen

Dr Graham Cheesman (11.30, Room 1)

Right at the centre of theological education is the role of the tutor or the teacher-student encounter, in or out of the classroom. Nothing else is nearly as important as this. The present emphasis is often on systems, quality control, curriculum, accreditation, methodology and so on. In fact 80% of real theological education takes place when a good tutor relates to a student and everything else mentioned above is the remaining 20% - or at least that is the viewpoint of the student. And, as theological tutors, it is the defining point of our ministry.

The model of the theological tutor's life and ministry has gone through a series of paradigm shifts since the second world war. What is emerging now is a new model that sees the good lecture and the academic competence of the lecturer as no longer enough. Increasingly, he or she is seen as the key to the spiritual development of the student, as the tutor becomes a mentor, a spiritual director, counsellor and companion in practical ministry. So how can we best describe the job today ?

Henri Nouwen, his example and his writings provide the most original, exciting, satisfactory, challenging and yet comforting exposition of a new, ministry oriented model of the work of a theological tutor. This seminar explores his work and writings from the ten years he spent on the staff at Yale (from 1971 to 1981), probably the happiest and most productive years of his life. The seminar will look at ;

1. His critique of the academic model and yet his working within it.
2. His groundbreaking new model based on the motif of hospitality.
3. His attitude to the dominance of words in theological education today and his advocacy of a role for silence.

Our discussions together will be aimed at assessing Nouwen's contribution to understanding the task of being a theological tutor, examining our own personal reactions to the new model and talking through how we can become more effective tutors for the glory of God and the development of Christ's kingdom.

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Spiritual Formation through Distance Learning

Randall Nolan (17.30, Room 3)

Spiritual formation can be effectively taught and learned through distance learning if, in course design and facilitation, participants give priority to the notion of exploring spiritual formation as, and within, a theological community of practice whose telos is the formation of virtuous learners.

Introduction

- A. Spiritual formation as conversion
- B. Conversion/transformation as the heart of theological education

I. Practices

- A. Beliefs and practices
- B. Theory and practices contrasted with technique

II. Community

- A. Community online
- B. Learners established in their home communities

III. Participation

- A. Acquisition versus participation
- B. Participation in the *mission Dei*

Conclusion

- A. Development in Christian virtue as the *telos* of spiritual formation
- B. A tale of two learners

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Trends in Distance (especially online) Education

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Ways and Means: how mentoring is practiced today

Sharon Heron (11.30, Room 3)

In recent decades there has been an increasing interest in the phenomenon of mentoring in diverse societal sectors with a resulting plethora of definitions. Confusion in the classification of Christian mentoring is also a reality. What is the difference between Christian Mentoring and discipleship, spiritual direction, pastoral counselling, supervision and tutoring for example? Through a synthesis of evidence gathered from primary sources (Scripture, Church history and tradition and contemporary writings) a definition of mentoring in Christian community that is holistic and integrative is offered. Christian communities in general and theological education communities in particular can be confident that this definition of mentoring with its five key descriptors is uniquely Christian and overarching.

1. Outlining Origins: a history of mentoring
2. Defying Definition: what Christian mentoring is not
3. Essential Elements: 5 key descriptors of Christian mentoring
 - *A Triadic Encounter*
 - *A Pathway of Growth*
 - *An Intentional Relationship*
 - *An Integrated Learning Experience*
 - *An Evaluative Reflective Process*
4. Contemporary Contexts: where mentoring is being practised
5. Potential Prospects: where we are heading

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The role of community in spiritual formation

Matthias Böker (11.30, Room 2)

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1. The relationship between study and life

 2. The role of fellowship for the encouragement and development of spiritual life
 - 2.1 Teaching is given throughout life in decisive measures

 - 2.2 Social and spiritual competences have the highest priority

 3. The concept of the training programme under the domain of spiritual formation
 - 3.1 Spiritual formation within the framework of the academic study
 - 3.1.1 Teaching units (as learning basis) (in extracts)

 - 3.1.2 Standardized certificate of achievement

 - 3.1.3 Framework of training programme

 - 3.2 Spiritual formation within the context of cohabitation
 - 3.2.1 Spiritual days of reflection

 - 3.2.2 Devotions (a communal part of a spiritual forming life)

 - 3.2.3 Prayer times

 - 3.2.4 Formation of the communal cohabitation framework

 - 3.2.5 Practical participation in working areas

 - 3.2.6 Mentoring

 - 3.3 Spiritual formation within the context of communal services
 - 3.3.1 Team assignment with lecturers/mentors

 - 3.3.2 Personally responsible held services (mentor and evaluation)

 - 3.3.3 Placement

 - 3.4 Final evaluation: „the giving of a key qualification during the studies at TSA“

 4. Working on an improvement of the concept

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