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Many of us encourage international students to attend our seminaries. This is possibly a learning experience for our students, but I wonder how effective it is for the foreign student. It is quite costly, either for him, his church or the seminary. He is learning in a culture far different from the one where he is preparing for ministry. Statistics show that he has less than a 50% likelihood of returning home after his study in America. Are we doing a disservice to international students and their home churches by encouraging them to come? Some of our seminaries (International School of Theology, Erskine Seminary, Fuller Seminary) sponsor and support extension seminaries in the Two-Thirds World. Would we be aiding students more by helping them to attend seminaries in their own culture?

A number of other areas of tension were mentioned. Yet, like the writer to the Hebrews, I conclude, 'What shall I say more? For time would fail me to speak of ...' *tensions between seminary objectives and church expectations, concerns to meet rising costs without raising tuitions unrealistically, the question of inerrancy, issues in the area of feminism, recruiting acceptable numbers and quality of students—including minorities, and recruiting and retaining qualified faculty.*

This paper is not to be considered a comprehensive treatment of the topic. But hopefully, it may stimulate our thinking and discussion, and may lead to further study of, and constructive responses, to these tensions.

Bruce C. Stewart is President of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. p. 50

Training Asians in Asia: From Dream to Reality

Bong Rin Ro

On 9 July 1989, at the Central Union Church in Manila, the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST) held its first commencement for eleven graduates in the presence of over three hundred people. Among these graduates, seven received their Ed.D. in Christian Education and four the Master of Theology (M.Th.) in Biblical Studies. The vision of training Asians in Asia, which many evangelical theologians have dreamed, had become reality in the history of the Asian Church.

PROLIFERATION OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

Asians are heard to say that if a Western missionary can bring \$10,000 from his home country, he can start a new seminary. Consequently, numerous theological schools have

been established in different countries of Asia. The 1988 Directory of Theological Schools in Asia¹ and the latest survey shows that there are at least 1076 such institutions.

Australia	81
Bangladesh	3
Burma	61
China	12
Hong Kong	24
India	159
Indonesia	104
Japan	75
Korea	165
Malaysia	19
New Zealand	11
Pacific Islands	21
Pakistan	15
Papua New Guinea	12
Philippines	227
Singapore	18
Sri Lanka	9

¹ Bong Rin Ro, *1988 Directory of Theological Schools in Asia* (Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1987), pp. 3–33.

Taiwan	33
Thailand	25
West Asia	2
Total	1076

One of the common characteristics of most of these theological schools is their low academic standard; therefore we must upgrade these schools in order to meet the needs of the rising academic standards of Asian society. [p. 51](#)

The Asia Theological Association (ATA) has upgraded the quality of education in two different ways: accreditation and AGST. ATA has given accreditation to 45 theological institutions in twelve countries; some 70 other schools have expressed their desire to receive accreditation from ATA. AGST is a joint effort of 17 evangelical seminaries in Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, and Korea to offer post-graduate degrees.

BASIC ISSUES IN THE ASIAN CHURCH

The concept of training Asians in Asia must be understood in the context of the Asian Church. According to a survey conducted by ATA, eleven church leaders cited seven basic issues confronting the Asian Church. They described the issues as:

1. Need for grass-roots evangelism
2. Lack of trained leadership
3. Need for lay training
4. Contextualization
5. Christian social responsibility (holistic approach)
6. Theological issues: Asian theology, dialogue with other living religions, human rights
7. Spiritual renewal²

Let us then look into the lack of trained leadership and need of lay training in the Asian Church.

SHORTAGE OF TRAINED LEADERSHIP

One of the major hindrances to the growth of the Asian Church is the lack of trained spiritual leaders. The large Batak Church (HKBP) in North Sumatra which has approximately 1.5 million members, including children, has only 287 parish ministers—a ratio of one pastor serving 5,000 members. One of the church districts which consists of 43 churches with 10,591 members has only one ordained pastor.³

Another Lutheran denomination in North Sumatra (GKPI) with 117,000 members and 600 churches in 1982 had only 68 ordained [p. 52](#) pastors and 23 evangelists. The

² 'Basic Issues in the Asian Church', *Asia Theological News* (May, 1978), pp. 4–11, 17–19.

³ David Baker, 'OMF and Theological Education', *East Asia Millions* (Aug./Sept. 1986), p. 88.

Protestant Church in Sabah in East Malaysia had 130 churches and 12,000 members with eight pastors and 160 lay leaders. Among 2,200 churches in Taiwan, some 500 do not have pastors.⁴

In India, the second most populous nation in the world with 730 million people, 400 villages have a ratio of one pastor to 8 churches. Another 200 villages have a ratio of one pastor to 180 churches. The ratio between full-time Christian workers and population is one to 120,000.⁵

Revd Samrit Wongsang, vice moderator of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), also pointed out a dearth of leadership in his country:

Eighty ministers have to serve 263 local churches throughout the country. Many churches are able to serve holy communion only once a year, because they cannot afford to hire a full-time worker.⁶

Eighty per cent of the Thai churches are located in the rural areas and eighty per cent of these churches do not have pastors. It is difficult to expect church growth without adequate spiritual leadership of pastors and lay leaders.

An inevitable consequence of this shortage of Christian workers is the large percentage of drop-outs among baptized converts from the Church. For example, most Christians in Taiwan came from Buddhist and folk religious backgrounds, and became Christians through English Bible studies, English camps, and other student activities.

Dr Allan Swanson, veteran Lutheran missionary in Taiwan, in *The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980*, cited the alarming statistics that the drop-out rate among the Mandarin speaking churches was 5.1 out of 6.1 converts while among the Taiwanese churches, it was 2.3 out of 3.3 converts. When these young converts married and set up their own families, they disappeared from the Church. The stronger family ties within the Taiwanese churches help to sustain this lesser drop-out rate.⁷ p. 53

Nevertheless, Dr Swanson alluded to the lack of a teaching ministry within the Church as one of the main causes for this loss of new converts. He published a subsequent book, *Mending the Nets*, in which he made numerous suggestions on how to nurture the believers. This critical problem of drop-outs represents a typical situation in other Asian countries.

ASIA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY (AGST)

In June 1984, nineteen delegates from fifteen seminaries in seven Asian countries met in Hong Kong to establish the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST). With AGST serving as an umbrella institution several evangelical graduate seminaries throughout Asia (Korea, Japan, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Singapore) can now jointly offer a cost-efficient, culturally-adapted, post-graduate degree in theology, Biblical studies, missiology, and Christian education.

AGST now offers the following graduate degrees: Th.M., Th.D., D.R.E., and D.Min. There are 43 AGST students studying for these degrees in the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan.

⁴ Bong Rin Ro, 'More Pastors Needed for Local Churches', *Asia Theological News* (Jan.-March, 1982), p.2. See 'Asian Pastors in "Western Paradises"', *Asian Theological News* (Jan.-March, 1986), p. 2.

⁵ 'The Pastor: Key to Renewal', *Asia Theological News* (April-June, 1983), p. 2.

⁶ Samrit Wong Sang, 'The Local-Rural Thai Church Issue', unpublished paper (Bangkok: Church of Christ in Thailand, 1981), p. 14.

⁷ Allan Swanson, *The Church in Taiwan: Profile 1980* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1982), p. 225.

The AGST in Korea will commence the Th.M. programmes in church growth and missions as well as in church history in September 1991. AGST will also start its External Master of Divinity in India in January 1990. There is a possibility of setting up other AGST programmes in Taiwan, Singapore/Malaysia, and Thailand in the future.

There are four objectives in the AGST programme:

1. *To supply faculty for theological schools.* If an Asian theologian has received a post-graduate degree from a school in the West, many theological schools in Asia will seek his teaching services. Thus, one may find a well-trained theologian teaching at three or four institutions. With such a dire shortage of well-trained evangelical theologians throughout Asia, we cannot continue to look to the West to supply educators for the thousand or more theological schools in Asia.

2. *To curtail the 'brain drain' to the West.* Statistics compiled by the National Youth Commission in Taiwan show that of 80,000 Taiwanese students who studied overseas from 1950 to 1983, more than 69,000 of them (86%) failed to return to Taiwan.⁸ Possibly due to the pending take-over of Hong Kong in 1997 by mainland China, more than 100 p. 54 Chinese pastors have left that city for the West during the past three years.⁹ Well-trained Chinese pastors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Philippines are migrating to the West in large numbers. In fact, more Chinese theologians live in 'Western Paradises', especially in North America, than in all of Asia.¹⁰

In 1989 there are more than 2000 Korean churches, 900 Chinese churches, 165 Japanese churches, 156 Vietnamese churches, and many other Asian ethnic churches among 5.1 million Asians in North America. The Asian population there will reach 10 million by 2000 A.D.

The ratio between 1,530 Korean churches and the Korean immigrant population in North America in 1985 was 1:605 while the same ratio between churches and population in South Korea was 1:1,396. Although the Korean Church has lost hundreds of her pastors to the West, 169 theological schools with 10,000 students have annually produced 3,000–4,000 Christian workers to replace the ones who left Korea.¹¹ But this is not the case with other countries in Asia, where foreign missionaries still must fill the gap.

Thousands of other well-trained pastors from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India and other Asian countries have likewise migrated to the West. The American Consulate in Madras reported that in the late 1970s the 'brain drain' among Indian theological students was 90%.¹² This is a primary reason why hundreds of churches in India do not have pastors.

While well-trained Asian pastors are immigrating to the West, new missionaries from the West are coming to Asia to reach Asians. This is certainly a paradox.

The solution to this severe problem is to establish our own theological schools throughout Asia. Through programmes like AGST we can retain many more theologians and church leaders for Asia.

⁸ Asia Graduate School of Theology brochure, produced by Asia Theological Association in Taiwan, 1985.

⁹ Frank Allen, Minister-at-large of SEND International, reported at the EFMA/IFMA Asia Brief Seminar in Chicago, April 2, 1986.

¹⁰ Bong Rin Ro, 'Asian Pastors in "Western Paradises"', pp. 2–3.

¹¹ 1985 *Directory of Korean Church in North America*, produced by Christian Culture Co., L.A., 1985, pp. 36–47, 79–88.

¹² Bong Rin Ro, 'More Pastors Needed for Local Churches', p. 2.

3. *To provide more economical training for Asians.* It costs approximately US\$36,000 to train a Singaporean student who has a Th.M. degree and wants to pursue his Ph.D. at Cambridge University for p. 55 three years. The annual expense for an Indian student who is studying at a well-known seminary in California is approximately \$12,000.

In contrast, training a Filipino theologian in the Philippines costs one-fifth of what it costs to train him in the West. Thus by training Asians in Asia we will be able to train far more students with the same amount of the Lord's money.

4. *To encourage cultural adaptation of theological education.* Because of the political, economic and cultural differences between Asia and the West, Asian theological students studying in the West often discover that much of what they learn is irrelevant to their own Asian contexts. Western evangelical theological schools have emphasized the inerrancy of the Scriptures and orthodox theology versus liberal and neo-orthodox theologies. But these are not major issues in Asia. Rather, the prevalent areas of concern are poverty, suffering, injustice, communism, and non-Christian religions. For this reason, contextualization is crucial. By training Asians in Asia, we will be able to contextualize theological education.

PRIORITIES FOR MODERN MISSIONS IN ASIA

It has been my privilege to work with theological schools in Asia for the past twenty years. In coordinating evangelical theological education under the sponsorship of Asia Theological Association, one question has repeatedly come to my mind over the years: 'How can we Christians who represent a mere 3% evangelize the billions of non-Christians in Asia with the Gospel of Christ?' It is obvious that we cannot depend on the 10,000 Western missionaries to evangelize Asia. We must find a better way. It is my firm conviction that *the chief service of Western missionaries is to train Asian Christians in Asia*, so that these nationals can reach their own people on the grass-roots level with the gospel.

And so I propose for Asia four suggestions for missions in the coming decades.

1. The burden of communicating the gospel and making disciples in the Third World must primarily be the nationals' responsibility.
2. Effective church growth in the Third World will depend on the creative and spirit-filled leadership of pastors and lay leaders.
3. The top priority of missionary work in the Third World in the coming decades should be the training of nationals. So we must train the national, give him responsibility, and *trust* him to do the job.
4. We must *train Asians in Asia* in order to curtail the brain drain, to p. 56 save the Lord's money, to deal with the particular Asian issues which they face, and to produce leaders in quality and quantity.

CONCLUSION

St. Paul in the first century faced a situation in Ephesus (Eph. 4) which offers many similarities to modern Asia today. Ephesus was the largest city in the Roman Province of Asia with 500,000 people. Asia today contains 2.8 billion or 58% of the world's population. Ephesus was a religious city with the huge temple of Diana (Acts 19:34), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. At present, the continent of Asia is permeated with the living religions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

It was a sinful city, as Paul described it in Ephesians 4:19: 'they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with

greediness'. In Asia we find the sins of political injustice and bribery as a way of life, wanton killing of dissidents and economic disparity whereby a few live in luxurious opulence while the masses starve.

The Ephesian church that consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians ([Eph. 2:11–13](#)) was small in size, lacked discipleship training ([Eph. 4:14](#)), and later lost its first love ([Rev. 2:4](#)). The Asian Church consisting of less than three per cent of its total population is divided by denominationalism and provincialism, and is in desperate need of discipleship training and effective leadership.

St. Paul's message to the Ephesian church is relevant to Asian Christians today:

He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ ([Eph. 4:11–12](#)).

How can the 3% minority of Asian Christians reach the gigantic population of 3 billion people in Asia with the Gospel? One of the best ways to achieve this goal is to produce more Asian church leaders, in quantity as well as quality, by training Asians in Asia.

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New Light on Theological Education in Africa

Paul Bowers

The phenomenal growth of African Christianity has rightly focused attention on the role of theological education in Africa. As churches multiply, and multiply again, the provision of trained leadership for such rapidly expanding communities has become a matter of increasingly urgent interest. And yet the descriptive study of theological education on the continent remains very much in its infancy.¹ Programmes of theological education in Africa—like African Christianity itself—are lively, diverse, and proliferating. But they have also been very poorly documented.

For example, a decade ago only two continental reference sources on theological schools were available. One knew of 152 theological schools in Africa, the other knew of 189.² Yet when the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)

¹ A much more detailed version of this material appears, under the same title, as Number 9 in the series ACTEA *Tools and Studies* (Nairobi: ACTEA, 1989), with considerably more statistical data and extensive supporting notes. [This publication is in turn a revised and corrected version of an article in the *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 6.2 (1987) 13–26.] Copies of ACTEA *Tools and Studies* No. 9 may be ordered, prepaid, at US\$3 per copy, from: ACTEA PO Box 60875, Nairobi, Kenya (cheques made payable to 'ACTEA').

² The first reference is to the publication of the Theological Education Fund, *Directory: Theological Schools and Related Institutions in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America & South Pacific* (8th ed. Bromley, Kent: