

More Than a Half Way Through

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As I mentioned earlier on this blog, this past semester has been enormously stressful. *Labor ipse voluptas* works well for me, but enough is enough. This labor was, on the other hand, rewarded by confirmed completion of the first part of my MTh program. This means that I should now be working on my thesis proposal. It also means that I'm done with courses. No more traveling to Brussels in the busiest time of my full time job and no more lectures. Not that I'd feel nostalgic, but in spite of my persistent intellectual willfulness, after those scattered 10 weeks of listening to professors, I feel kind of... "formed". My views on certain matters in the fields of Bible and theology have changed over the past 2 years. I'm not really sure whether the school itself would like it. I'm pretty sure though that all of my 8 professors do bear responsibility for this development.

Let me now share three insights into the character of lectures that I've attended. I will not give any names and I don't encourage anyone to try to pinpoint anyone. These general thoughts are NOT intended as an "evaluation" of my professors, neither is it a "feedback".

1. Professor's academic background significantly determines his way of thinking and style of teaching.
 - Only 3 of my 8 professors have degrees from the US, five of them have PhDs from Oxford, Durham and London.
 - Professors with British academic background are rather reserved as scholars. They are harder to impress. They don't dismiss creativity, but they subject it under a somewhat harsher scrutiny. They would rather appreciate rigorous skills (e.g. linguistic training) than originality of thought.
 - Professors with US degrees are generally easier to impress with a penetrating thought. They do appreciate rigorous skills, but they are more open to creative thinking, which is not necessarily backed up by those skills.
 - Only one of the five professors with British degrees have published an accessible book. By "accessible" I mean a book which doesn't require a specific rigorous training and is readable for more than several dozen people within their specific field of study.
 - All of the professors with US education have published an accessible books. By accessible, I don't mean shallow or popularly written, but rather a book that has a clear and significant output for anyone who is familiar with the field, but is not an expert.
 - There was no female professor on masters level. I don't suspect some gender bias though, because there are female professors on the undergraduate level.
2. Sum of the professors purported expertise and rigorous skills is not in direct proportion to his teaching abilities. Some professors, who couldn't have boasted with extreme learning (such as reading in 5 modern and 4 classical languages), were, on the other hand, quite penetrating thinkers and good communicators. Some of them were geniuses of connecting students with their field of study and encouraging them to contribute to it. Professors who could boast with more substantial learning than others, were sometimes rather lukewarm as communicators.
3. Every professor has something to say. Something important, that stays with you even after a number of months. These "germs of wisdom" are often quite simple. I suspect that these germs were agents of change which stimulated my intellectual transformation and change of some opinions. Again, I won't give any names. But if you apply for masters program at CTS (which I heartily recommend), you'll meet the people who said this.

If you want to change a person, you must change his theology, because no one can live for a long time contrary to how he sees himself.

Be not partisan. Be eclectic in what you believe.

We can't live our lives as long as there is no such thing as truth.

Theology is often reflection of the theologian's experience.

The Holy Spirit becomes significant when Church experiences despair.

Odd Christian is the one who is isolated. If you want to be a balanced Christian, you need to be a community based Christian.

There's nothing like truth in the vacuum. There's no uninculturated truth.

Make your faith supralogical, don't make your faith illogical.

The only baggage that you won't bring into the Kingdom of God is the one that you choose to put down.

If there was no doubt, there could be no faith. Faith can only exist in a company of doubt.

Never eat a good book if there is a better book.

The temptation to form premature theories upon insufficient data is the bane of our profession. (quoting Sherlock Holmes)

If God has called a woman to preach let no man put a straw in her path. (quoting William Seymour)

God almighty is no fool... would he fill a woman with the Holy Spirit – endow her with ability – give her a vision for souls and then tell her to shut her mouth? (quoting Eleanor Frey)

So much for my insights. Any comments?

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