

DISCIPLESHIP AND MENTORSHIP IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: A REFLECTION ON 2 Kings 2:1-14

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Lausanne Orthodox Initiative Conference in Cambridge, UK on 5th-8th September 2017

1. Context of the Text

This text is about the spiritual and ministerial relationship of Elijah and Elisha. This relationship had started six years before this final episode of their relationship noted here. After Elijah had defeated and slaughtered the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:22-46), Jezebel the wife of King Ahab had threatened to kill him also (1 Kings 19:1-2). While on the run and with much distress that he was the only one fighting idolatry and standing with the Lord, he was instructed to anoint two new kings and a prophet to succeed him in his ministry (1 Kings 19: 14-18). Elijah thus went seeking for them. He met Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen and threw his cloak around him to denote receiving him into prophet-hood (1 Kings 19:19-21). Elisha does not take much time to think about leaving his farming life and joining the line of becoming a prophet. He slaughtered his farming oxen and distributed its cooked meat to the local people, burnt his ploughing material, and bid his family goodbye, then follows Elijah until this last day of Elijah on earth.

Elijah becomes a mentor to Elisha his new protégé who God choose as his successor. Elisha follows his master and works for him, learning the ropes of how to become a prophet day and night. On this particular day, the mentor and somehow the protégé knows that it is the very last day of Elijah on earth. Elijah tries to put Elisha off him, but to no avail. He follows him to the end, when he is given the mantle to continue the ministry.

2. Mentorship in Scripture

This text is one of the biblical texts that show mentorship in the ministry of the Lord. Mentorship here denotes teaching and guiding a protégé into becoming a minister or servant of the Lord. Other mentorship examples in scripture includes Moses and Joshua (Exodus 24:13, Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 31:7-8), Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1), Peter and Barnabas (Galatians 2:11-13), Paul and Mark (Acts 12:25-13:5), Paul and Timothy (1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:2), Paul and Titus (Titus 1:1), and even more important Christ and His Apostles as seen in the Gospels (cf. Chua and Lessing, 2013: 86-90). It is such mentoring that helped pass on the Christian faith and spirituality from the early Church to us today.

3. Mentorship in the Early Church

One great example of the early church mentorship is of Archbishop Alexander and the young Athanasius in the fourth century, both of my home-Patriarchate of Alexandria. Archbishop Alexander picks the young man Athanasius and moulded him into a great theologian and spiritual leader. This young man would later be sent out to represent his Archbishop and the church of Alexandria in the first ecumenical council in Nicaea in AD325. The young Deacon Athanasius defended the faith of his mentor against the heresy of Arius, in even a better way than the Archbishop would have managed. He succeeded his master and mentor and became the 20th Archbishop of Alexandria, lasting for about 45 years as its primate.

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4. Mentorship in 2 Kings 2:1-14

a. Importance of Mentorship

Many leaders in ministry do not see the need for mentorship in this age taking it to be a worthless ancient practice. One important aspect to always remember is that there is no one who is permanent in whatever position he or she holds today. You will one day give it to someone else naturally; if you will move a step higher or retire, or immaturely; if you will die, get sick, or loss your job before the end of your contracted teaching time.

Even God in 1 Kings 19 anticipates that when one reaches their prime age, they must then start preparing others to take over from them. Thus God does ask Elijah to prepare his successor, Elisha. The experienced must not wait until they are too old to prepare anyone, but rather they should do so when they have enough time to teach and mentor their protégés for the betterment of the ministry and the glory of God. When Elijah is told to go seek for his successor he goes on and does as God instructs. He does not care how good he is in his work, nor does he even argue that he is to be waited upon until he dies for someone to be brought to his office, which was the case in other prophets before him. He does not mistreat or refuse to show his supposed successor the prophetic ministry, but rather trains him to his level best. We all must learn from Elijah and start seeking for our successors as God expects it from all of us, especially those in His ministry. We must bring the multiplying effect of our God given gifts, by sharing them with those others that God has given unto us.

The reason we need to be more active in producing mentorship programs in our theological institutions is also because of the condition of the students we receive in the seminaries and theological universities. Such includes students that are less grounded on Christianity in general, or even the Christian traditions we belong to; students that studied under very secular societies are our current students; or even young students brought up by very busy parents that did not have time to form them spiritually (Chiroma, 2015:210-213). The seminary being a starting point and not the destination of the students should make sure that such deficiencies are eradicated well in advance in their formation training. We usually leave academic deficiencies in the hands of academic advisors, while the spiritual and mental formation in our theological institutions is left to the university or seminary chaplain if not the dean of students or the psychological student guide. But are they up to the task, in handling the many students we have? Unfortunately we are still complaining of the quality of students and theologizing about how to handle the situation, and not really doing much about the problem in question.

While the going out and teaching is for all according to the Great Commission of Christ in Matthew 28:16-20, a text read to all Orthodox believers after their Christening, the ones given the responsibility of teaching in theological institutions should be more careful. This is because the other reason why mentorship is important for theological educators and students is the fact that the teachers of faith are promised very harsh judgement if they do not deliver as expected. “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes” (James 3:1-2a). It maybe true that we have made mistakes in the past, by neglecting spiritual mentorship, but it is important to review what has been done and what can be done better in our theological institutions henceforth.

b. Characteristics of Mentorship

For effective theological and spiritual mentorship there are some basic characteristics that are needed.

i. Strong Bond

Authentic mentors and protégés create very strong and mostly unbreakable bonds within themselves. The fatherly or motherly relationship in ministerial mentorship is the most important litmus of a genuine mentorship. When there is genuine love, care and concern involved then the protégé will keep the legacy and ministry of their mentor intact, if not do them one better. Such

mentorship then turns out to be a discipleship, which yields more in the lifetime of the one protégé originally prepared.

The bond between Elijah and Elisha is shown to be truly authentic and deep. As of that morning when Elisha learnt that his mentor was leaving him, he was very saddened, although he did not show it openly at the beginning. When the other prophets reminded him of his upcoming loss, he told them to stop telling him, probably because unknown to them he was internally mourning. It was only when he tore his cloak after his mentor left him, to symbolize his mourning (Gen 37:29, 44:13), that one sees the deep sorrow in him. After the departure of Elijah, Elisha calls him father twice in much pain showing how much he felt for losing his six years mentor, teacher, guide, instructor, counsellor, leader, and spiritual master (Gen 45:8; Judges 17:10-11).

This begs the question, what kind of bond do we have with our protégés or mentor?

ii. Legacy and Continuity of the Ministry

It is important to remember that all we have done may one day come to an end with just what we have done so far. This is if we do not look for others to continue our dreams and ministry. Elijah made sure that someone who knew why it was important, and how best it was to be done, would continue his work of fighting idolatry in Israel among other prophetic works. He therefore, got Elisha as his prophet and made him a champion of the same course as his. It is paramount for us to know that even if our current ministry is so good and revered by many, it may end up dying because we have not prepared persons who will take over from us, and who have the same sentiments, skills and motives as we do. It is therefore imperative to ask ourselves if we shall be remembered after our departure from our current ministry, and also who will continue our legacy, skills, values and knowledge after we depart from this life.

Although Elijah had other prophets and even mentored them in different ways, he did not prepare many prophets to take his position, rather he had one among them that he taught and mentored closely to the best of his ability. It maybe we claim we have taught many students and so expect much from them, but whom have we really brought close to us for mentoring? Is God's work through you going to die, as your successor will have no idea how to continue your work, no matter how good it was? Elijah's ministry to God did not die or stop one bit because his successor knew each and everything about it. Elisha thus did not start with some new scheme and plan of work, but rather continued the already existing responsibilities and priorities in the ministry of his mentor Elijah, which he had known of even before they parted.

In their lifetimes, that is if we consider all their ministry works to be recorded in the scriptures, Elisha did more miracles than Elijah: Elisha having sixteen (16) recorded miracles while Elijah had just eight (8). Christ after His ministry on earth left His Apostles to take over from Him, having prepared them through teaching them for three years. The effect of these Apostles and their successors is the reason we are believers today. If we do a good mentoring job, our protégés will even do us one better by spreading the word in a much bigger way and recreating more protégés in their life time, creating a multiplying effect of the seed we put in them.

For reasons of the continuity of the ministry and mission through theology, as well as keeping our legacy, we need to ask and think through some questions,

- Who will remember your/my work?
- Who will continue your/my legacy after your retirement or even after your departure from this life?
- What impact have you created in your protégé(s) to warrant some display of affection at your departure?

iii. Spirituality and the Holy Spirit

Do we only teach our students the academics that we learnt in school? Or do we also add our personal holistic realisation in the field of theology, as well as our spiritual life into the student's growth and development? As we already know, some religious institutions have ruled out spiritual mentorship, saying theology has to be taught outside faith so that anyone who wants to study the same can do so with no prejudice. This disconnection of theology and spirituality puts transformation of the person studying theology on hold. In fact, some of the individuals that teach theology in some religious institutions are sometimes not believers, but are rather teaching in such institutions because they are considered the authority in certain theological or religious areas.

In my younger student days, I once left and dropped a biblical class in a prestigious university after learning that the professor teaching the class, who was considered the authority of the book he was teaching on, was an atheist. Of course he being an authority was the reason I was there, but it somehow did not feel right after learning the whole truth. Was I justified to leave the class? Maybe I would have at least used the critical approach of deciphering the truth using an approach like that which Saint Basil recommended to the Youth when studying in pagan literature classes of his time (Saint Basil, 2011). Asking them to be like bees that collect nectar from so many flowers, some sweet and some poisonous, and with all that create the sweet honey we eventually see as their final product. Was this person right to teach that course, or was I over dramatic and inexperienced? Whose responsibility was it to get the right person to teach the class? Was it the school leadership or I? Even though my approach is changed dramatically with time, I wonder if that is still happening to many of our new and young theological students who do not feel strong enough to be subjected to such critical deciphering. After all they know very little theology to really be able to decipher the truth and what is not, when taught matters of faith by non-believers.

May be the question to ask in all of this is, can theology be learnt from just an academic point of view, or do we also need Holy Spirit led teachers to teach it? Do we really need the Holy Spirit to guide our spiritual understanding and ministry (Luke 14:49), to guide us into truth and show us things to come (John 16:13), to speak through us (Matt 10:20; Acts 2), to witness to others (Acts 1:8), to testify about Christ (John 15:26), to give us oratory wisdom (Acts 6:10), to heal our infirmities (Rom 8:26), and even to teach us (1 Cor 2:13)?

As Christ showed when He was explaining to Nicodemus a learned man of the Jewish law and religion (Jewish theology), about the birth of water and Spirit, it is impossible for one to just hear and fully understand the words taught to them about God, if they are outside the Spirit. Christ therefore told Nicodemus “‘you are Israel's teacher,’ said Jesus, ‘and do you not understand these things?’”, (John 3:10), to denote that even though Nicodemus was a learned man, he was not able to grasp even the basic message of God, because he lacked the Holy Spirit to enlighten him in that. As Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh reminds us “our knowledge of the Holy Spirit is experience” from a personal level (Anthony, 2010: 128). Those without this experience therefore can never fully internalize and understand the theology taught to them, like the story just told of Nicodemus. It was this experience that Elijah would not know of his protégé Elisha. This was because the Holy Spirit experience is personal and only Elisha would feel it, and not anyone else for him, including his very spiritually abled master, Elijah. Thus he told Elisha that if he saw him being taken away then, he could have the ability to succeed him with the spiritual double portion as he had requested (2 Kings 2:10-11). It was Elisha who personally feels the Spirit and hence his inner power of prophecy is activated.

Theology is in many instances today considered like any other subject, and therefore it is taught like all other academic subjects. The theology students taught in this age are highly interested in ways to help them pass their exams to show their mastery of the subject, as is common in the rest of academia. Is just passing theological exams enough? Can one really learn theology like any

other kind of study or do they need a personal relationship with God? The reality is when we study theology like other subjects; we exclude the place of the Holy Spirit in enlightening us and revealing God internally to us. We cannot learn theology like we do history or other areas of study. For us to become theologians we need that personal relationship with God. According to Saint Evagrius of Pontus (AD 345-399), this relationship is realized in prayer, when the intellect ascends (vs.36), and communes with God (vs.3), uniting the one praying and the one being prayed to (On Prayer in *Philokalia*, 1979: 62). Thus Evagrius says “If you are a theologian you will pray truly. And if you pray truly you are a theologian” (On Prayer vs.61 in *Philokalia*, 1979: 62). God in this case, reveals Himself even more to those who strive to become one with Him in prayer, where they experience Him on a personal level. An experience we see in Elisha when he prays to the God of Elijah before striking the water with his newly received mantle and miraculously the water separates (2 Kings 2:14). This meeting point of *praxis* (practice) and *theoria* (theory), we must endeavour to see our students receive.

c. Characteristics of the Mentor

i. Obedient Co-Educators with the Trinity

After Elijah had poured his fears before God, thinking he was alone as a faithful prophet and servant of God, God then instructed him to among others anoint Elisha as his successor (1 Kings 19:16). Elijah obeys and does as instructed (1 Kings 19-21). He even goes ahead and shows him the ropes on how to be a prophet for the next six years. God instructed and he obeyed.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15 NRSV)

As denoted in the above passage of John, theological educators must remember their calling in this field entails bringing the human element of the teaching ministry, into the existing one of the Holy Trinity. The work of teaching what God the Father wants revealed to humanity is continued by the Holy Spirit and is expressed in the Church through the mouths and lives of the believers, as further expressed in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20. Christ makes it clear that not all is been taught to His disciples about God, but slowly by the slowly, God reveals Himself in different ways to His people, thus He says “I still have many things to say to you” (John 16:12). This human expression of the knowledge imparted and revealed to humans by God the Father, through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, is among others a great responsibility of the theological educators. They must therefore, like Elijah obey, and offer their all for the glory of God’s name, knowing that the Spirit of God will reveal and guide them in “*all the truths*” (John 16:13), and that they must then obey and confer the same to their students.

ii. Leading by Example

Elisha was able to cross the Jordan after parting with his mentor only because he had learnt well on what his master had done. His master had shown him by example on how to live a life worth of God’s holiness to the extent that his prayer and desire of wanting to cross on dry land, as they had done when with his master before, was fulfilled in the exact same way. Although Elijah had not intended the act of using the mantle to create a path on the waters of Jordan to be a lesson (2 Kings 2:8), Elisha watched and internalized it as a lesson; both of them not knowing Elisha would soon after use it (2 Kings 2:14).

It is this same approach that Christ, the Teacher, offered His Apostles after He had washed their feet, asking them to not only say but also do what they teach. And thus He said, “You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:13-15 NRSV). Christ attests to the fact that

mentoring is showing the protégé what and how to do things. The protégé watches not only what you say, but also what you do. This includes when we sometimes do differently than what we say. Theological educators must meter their lives and live in conformity with the Godly ways they teach, knowing that their students look upon every step of their ministry as well as their lives.

iii. Spiritual Parenthood

Right before Elijah is taken away, Elisha was given one request to ask for and he asked for a double portion of the spirit of Elisha (2 Kings 2:10), after which he then saw Elijah being taken away and cried to him calling “Father, father!” (2 Kings 2:12). These two acts shows the relationship of Elijah and Elisha had grown into a spiritual parent - spiritual child relationship. Elisha having been a spiritual child of Elijah for six years had surely grown spiritually. The activities that happen and terminologies used right before the departure of Elijah confirms this. Both Elijah and Elisha knew that Elijah was going to depart from this life and because it was customary for a dying father to bless his son, both expected some form of blessings to happen, maybe something similar to what Jacob did to his sons at his deathbed (Genesis 49). In Elisha’s inheritance request he used the terms “double portion”, which were used in Israel to denote the bigger share the firstborn/loved child or a beloved wife inherited from their father or husband respectively (Genesis 48:22; Deuteronomy 21:17; 1 Samuel 1:5; Isaiah 61:7). The other action confirming this spiritual father- spiritual son relationship is what Elisha says when he saw the chariots that would carry his master, and sorrowfully cried calling Elijah Father twice.

Some of our religious and theological programs do not care much about the spiritual maturity of their teachers. That in itself put our theological education in a dilemma, considering teaching theology remains the mission of revealing God to those who will go and reveal Him to others. Can we really mix things of the spirit and of the flesh, knowing very well that those of the flesh only speaks and know of the flesh and those of the spirit speak and know of the spirit (John 3:6; Rom 8:1-16). The scripture is very clear on the fact that those not in the Spirit cannot understand anything of the Spirit, leave alone teach it. Therefore Saint Paul says,

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2:12-14 NRSV).

What can the non-believers and those whose spiritual life is not in order going to offer to our future ministers of the gospel?

But if spiritual mentorship in the world of theological education is to be compared with spiritual fatherhood/ motherhood as lived in the Christian life, then what becomes of such mentorship if the teachers are not themselves spiritually mature? I compare mentorship with the people we call spiritual fathers/mothers in the Orthodox tradition. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware defines spiritual mentors using an analogy as follows

If we are climbing a mountain for the first time, we need to follow a known route; and we also need to have with us, as companion and guide, someone who has been up before and is familiar with the way. To serve as such a companion and guide is precisely the role of the *abba* or spiritual father (Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 2000: 127).

We may second guess ourselves and say that we are not equal to the task of being spiritual elders, but we already are. For the spiritual mentor (father or mother) is not ordained by the hand of man but of God and deals with the whole man, not just on spiritual issues (Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 2000: 129-130), an aspect that theological educators should embrace more.

The spiritual mentor, like the Orthodox tradition teaches about the spiritual fathers and mothers, must be experienced themselves for them to be able to cater for others. Otherwise we shall

“mistake the sailor for the pilot, a sick man for a doctor, a passionate for a dispassionate man, the sea for the harbour, and so bring about the shipwreck of our souls” (John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 4.6). The mentors must themselves be fed with a spiritual life, for if they are undernourished, then they will in return offer nothing to their protégés. Like the bible says, “If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a pit” (Matt 15:14 NIV), and thus our theological educators must first immerse themselves into the Godliness that they teach about, for them to really teach it. Saint Paisios insists that the mentor must be “a spiritual man with virtues, seasoned in the practice of spirituality more than a teacher of these” (Saint Paisios, *Epistles* 2002:43). Thus teaching about spirituality or theology is not the only important responsibility for theological educators, but rather practicing what they teach.

d. Characteristics of the Protégé

i. Hardworking

Elisha was a farmer. The first time we meet Elisha, he was in the farm ploughing (1 Kings 19:19). Coming from a wealthy family would have meant also having servants to help with the work. Elisha being young would mainly have wanted to rest, rather than work. In fact his hardworking status seems to extend beyond this because, he even owned the twelve oxen. This is shown by the fact that he does not return them to his parents, to whom he bids goodbye (1 Kings 19:20), but rather decides to slaughter and give the meat to others (1 Kings 19:21). Elisha further proves he was hardworking by serving his master Elijah for the next six years.

It is important that the people we mentor be hardworking. Considering what Christ once said being true to this very moment that, “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37). We need to mentor persons willing to go the extra mile in their ministry, as we not only serve those who have been enjoined to Christ, but also those who still do not know Christ, as well as those who have since neglected their faith in Christ.

ii. Humility

From what we can deduce from what he was using to farm; twelve yoke of oxen pulling a plough (1 Kings 19:19), it is clear that Elisha came from a well-off family. Nevertheless, it is strange that although they were wealthy, Elisha was the one farming and not some servants. Further humility is shown after he receives the mantle. Although Elisha knew surely that Elijah had been taken by the whirlwind, and that he and the other prophets knew he was now in-charge, he still gave permission to search for Elijah’s body on the mountains as the other prophets requested (2 Kings 2:15-18). He would have said no to them, and pointed out that they were wasting time. He even waited at Jericho for their return and report (2 Kings 2:18), knowing very well that they would find nothing, but out of humility gave their word a chance.

Humility is not an easy gift to cultivate and own within us as well as in others. We are in most instances proud of our achievements and ourselves, not thinking of the others. It is paramount that we mould humility in our protégés, for as the saying of old says, “pride comes before the fall”, and failure is not what we want to see in those who will keep and continue our legacy.

iii. Obedience

Since the day Elijah came to Elisha and told him of God’s command that he be his successor, Elisha did not turn back (1 Kings 19). He followed his new master relentlessly till the very last day of his master’s life (2 Kings 2). For any protégé to succeed s/he must fully obey her/his mentor, who will guide them not only on matters of knowledge and life, but also of the heavenly Kingdom. It is this undying obedience that made Elisha a star afore all the other prophets in Israel, thus taking his master’s mantle and responsibilities (2 Kings 2:13-18).

iv. Sacrifice

As noted elsewhere, Elisha came from a wealthy family that owned land and was able to keep seeds and animals in their farm even after a massive three years drought season, which had just ended (1 Kings 18:41-46). Elisha would have said no to Elijah, this more so knowing that Elijah

was not different from any other prophet in the past. It was expected that Elijah would stay in fear and run from the local civil authorities, like he was doing at this moment running away from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3), not owning a place of himself but rather moving from one place to another giving God's message, among other non-luxurious ways of living. But still Elisha follows him. He sacrificed his life for the ministry of God, an essential trait we need in our protégés.

v. Love

Elisha was a very loving and generous individual as our first encounter denotes. After he decides to follow Elijah as his protégé, he slaughters his oxen, cooks the meat, and gives the same to the local people (1 Kings 19:21). He would have decided to keep the animals with his parents, or employed someone to care for them, or even given them out to the people to slaughter and divide it amongst them. He rather does all the work and invites the people to come and eat. The first rains having just started after three years of drought (1 Kings 18:41-46), nothing much existed in the land. This shows his love and care for others. This act of Elisha giving out his wealth to the hungry and poor and following his mentor is prescribed by Christ to a rich young man in Matthew 19:21. Out of love and respect for the mission of God in his life Elisha does this act of love voluntarily.

Although theological students understand Christianity is based on the love of God for humanity, and that church ministry has a lot of emphasis on love of the minister to the congregants. What becomes a challenge is living this prescribed love for all, even when those you are expected to love do not love you back. If you have no love for even one of the least persons who deserves your love, it becomes very difficult to keep up with the Lord's ministry. The protégé must learn that the people they will serve will sometimes be the ones to give them the most joy of their life, while the same or some of them will also be the ones to bring them the worst of sorrows. In any one of these instances, the protégé must remember to be faithful to their ministry and still love those who hate and those who love them equally and minister to them without favour. The protégé must know that sometimes they will meet situations in their ministry that were never taught to them, and so will come up with their own solutions for the same, and if they use the compass of love in the solution, then they will always be successful.

vi. Commitment

When Elisha slaughtered his twelve oxen and gave them out to the people, he was making a declarative message of his commitment to both Elijah and the ministry of prophet-hood. Elijah who had just invited Elisha into this life seems to have not been very sure that having Elisha as a protégé was the right thing to do, probably knowing the pains he will enjoin him into. Elijah therefore pushes him away and tells him "Go back again; for what I have I done to you" (1 Kings 19:20b). In response Elisha then erased his former life of a farmer in front of his future master, showing his final decision on the matter.

Another example of Elisha's commitment is shown in him not leaving Elijah even when he learnt that he was to depart from this life. Thrice Elijah tried to keep him off the experience of his departure, but Elisha was relentless and so kept following his master till the very end (2 Kings 2:2,4,6). All the other prophets knew Elijah was to die (2 Kings 2:3,5), but still did not follow him, even the fifty (50) prophets who came close only went as far as near the Jordan (2 Kings 2:7).

One way of identifying protégés is by identifying those who wants to be with you, those who admire your work and way of doing things, those who love your subject most, and those whose love for the church is clear. Such persons could sometimes be those who do not perform well in our classes or those we think are still too young, and thus the discernment of the theological educator is needed to determine such.

vii. Transformation

Theology should and must aim to transform its students, for through them then the Christians are transformed. The theologians we create in the seminaries are therefore not studying just for their own sake, but also for and on behalf of their future or present congregants. These students do not only represent Christ and the church because they are members of the church, but also because their ministry concerns proclaiming the salvation of Christ until His second coming. They become what Saint Basil the Great calls the proclaimers of the gospel, about whom he says,

“The proclaimers of the gospel are the lips and eyes of the body of Christ. As lips they lend their voices to the Holy Spirit in order that he may write ‘the words of eternal life in the hearts of the faithful’; as eyes their function is to ‘discern between good and evil, and guide the members of Christ towards what befits each’” (Fedwick, 1979: 77).

e. Mentorship and Ecumenism

One of the challenges that the ecumenical movement is been dealing with is negative mentorship that is developed and practised within various Christian traditions. In such, one Christian tradition thinks they are the best there is and that the other then should be rubbished. In most instances, those with such negative perspectives of thought do not give themselves time to learn whom the other(s) are, but rather judges them from a face-value perspective. These self-righteous attributes are mainly passed along from one generation to the other through negative oriented mentorship. Such forms of mentorship, that undermine the other while teaching and speaking wrongly about them, has been the reason for the hate and creation of distances and boundaries between many Christian traditions. In such kind of negativity “where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind” (James 3:16 NRSV).

It is imperative that we should learn about the other before we get to judge anything that they do or say. Thus it is important that our mentorship should take the “see and hear” approach before the “talk and react” part happens. As we mentor young theologians and our protégés in the Christian ecumenical movement, it is important to mentor them better than we were mentored. That is, encourage and open doors for dialogue and learning about the other traditions in our pluralistic societies. Ignorance has been given too much space in the ecumenical movement and ecumenical mentorship. It is therefore time to not only shelve it, but also actually discard it in its entirety. These will help create the needed conducive space in our hearts, minds, theological curriculums, research, and writing for both theological and spiritual mentorships.

Conclusion

Christianity as well as theological formation in the past was based on mentorship, but has since changed. The story of Elijah and Elisha here used, reminds us of the values for such an approach. We must endeavour to retrieve this great practice that helps us not only make protégés but also discipleship that offers a holistic transformation of the individual and society, for the glory of God and His Mission in the world, through the Church and it’s many institutions like the theological schools.

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