

"Strengthening Christian Higher Education in an Era of Global Transformation"

“THE AWARENESS OF THE UNFINISHED TASK”

[2Ti 2:2]

Living in the postmodern world, whether we all are aware it or not, the influences of global transformation are undeniable. Nowadays people are talking of technology, politic, economic, social issues in terms of postmodernism. Since we are living in the midst of human beings, we all are exposed to worldviews of all kinds. Within any given situation we all are in crisis of identity and exploitation about being Christians.

Without any apology, we all know the fact that our christianity needs improvement in our Christian education from the Sunday school to the seminary. When the whole world is in the process of transforming her elements and impacts, we the Christians are in no way changed into our improvement of basic education in any kind in the family, in the church, in the society and in the mission expertise. In other words, change is the modern terminology yet for the christians, we still end up in struggle with our denominational theology, traditions and worldviews.

The Need:

In order to meet the modern challenges that we encounter in lives as the ministers the word of God alike, we have to answer the questions that are patterning to our faith, verbally or unverbally, consciously or unconsciously. As the apostle Peter stated we all are in need of being ready to answer the questions(1Pet3:15), not merely preaching the word of God in season or out of season(2Ti4:1-2). For the **post modernism** demands the truth about our faith directly or indirectly. Once the function of the Biblical mandate was that people inclined to become the by word of uncivilized people. In other words, if you are a Christian then, you are an uncivilized, backward, undeveloped person as such in the modern mind set of the people. Thus all things are measured up by the “ego” of “I and Me”

At the same time the high speed **development of technology** too keeps up with modernism and seems to answer all the questions that people seek in their lives. The ever changing human civilization seems to demand the mood of fixing the norm for the sake of its own convenience rather than the universal truth or the absolute truth that demands the value of human dignity. Cultural differences seem to undermine the intrinsic truth that we as the Christian uphold at the cost of life. In other word, some people seem to change the means and meant of the Biblical truth as the expenses of its truthfulness in matter of faith and life.

Never before in human history, the post modern world is rushed into the **present civilization** that seek to relativism. Most of the job seekers end up in urban set up whereby all things seem like easy to catch up in a matter of time. Moreover, the human institution also tends to offer the best for humankind as the reward for civilizing her countrymen. Thus all the working people are rushing

into urban set up as new persons in order to meet the longing of the soul with the expense of crucifying family duty or bond. So far all the rural area and countryside lifestyle has become a joke for the urban civilization.

Taking into account of the **modern religious movement**, so called the globalization or ecumenical movement propergate/ advocates the oneness of world religions and tend to conclude with the notion that all religions in the world are the same in the ultimate reality but not in the function and magnifestation. Thus all the world religions try to convert their Philosophies into Theologies, whereas the so called Christians[some] try to convert their theologies into Philosophies. The basic question is "Is converting of Theology into Philosophy the mandate for Christians to do so as the Great commission demand? Or can we crucify the biblical teachings at the expense of accepting the other religious teachings as the means of up lifting our Christian education?"

Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, Christianity is a individual/ personal matter in a sense of relationship with God. Thus there is no corporate or representative business in matter of faith and life. Moreover the teaching and the preaching of the biblical doctrines are intended for each generation. Thus here St Paul stated **the task of Christianity** is transmitting/ transferring one generation to the next generation. As a matter of fact, Paul stated that, it would be four generations in sequence(IITi 2:2). In other word, the uniqueness of christianity is contended for each individual with each generation. Therefore the true Christianity did not give any possibility of representative or on behalf of concept in its ingredients.

The importnace;

People on the earth are informed or uninformed, they all are aware of certainties in the world. The way of life, the way of behaviour, the way of conception, the way of reactions, all these are related to our worldview. Though we tend to say that we are much rooted and grounded in the word of God, at the same time, the present **worldview** effect our reaction to the daily experience as well as the things that matters for spirituality. In other words, how, what and why we live is the result of our worldview. Consciously or unconsciously the impact of worldview is the determining factor for our lives as a whole. It can be safe to say that the impact of worldview is the source of human life.

Living in post modernism is nothing but rejecting all things that are tended to be religion or people try to live without religious elements and adovocate the fact that, we can live and exist without religion. The basic tenet of this concept compel to humankind that the ultimate goal of and for mankind is the world that does not have any religious elements. Thus this **secularism** becomes the means for politic, social, economic and morality in human society. This secularism is the only legitimate source for human functioning in the given society or country or even in the world. The real message of secularism is nothing but we can do and live without God/ the ultimate reality.

When the secular world try to bring all things to global village, all the religions in the world try to unify all religious elements in the world. Thus since the World War II, people tried to advocate **religious plursalism** as the means of peace and tranquility of humankind. This religioius pluralism impacts a great deal on Christianity too. Thus even some Christian leaders tended to crucify the biblical norms in order to make room for other religious persuasion. But the truth is that the other

religions never give any room for the Biblical Christianity. Nowadays people try to minimize “the faith once delivered to the saints,”(Jude 3) to acceptable norm or idea for all people without distinction in religious persuasion.

As the progressive revelation is uphold, so the progressive development of knowledge and understanding about the Bible are. The improvement of **Biblical scholarship** is in much progress than centuries ago. Thus the impact, the contribution and the development of Christian scholarship demand the awareness of competitiveness with the secular world unconsciously. At the same time, this impact focus on how important is biblical scholarship for the Christians in the postmodern world. In order to meet the challenges of the secular world, we the Christians need a kind of scholarship that meet and explain the true meaning of being Christians.

As the word of Jesus, “My father sent me, so Sent I you”(John 20:21) to the disciples are still the basic **Biblical mandate** for a true disciple of Jesus Christ. For the demand of discipleship and identification with Jesus must be expressed in terms of fulfilling the Great Commission as we have in the N.T. We all are expected to follow footsteps of Jesus no matter what happen to us. In other words, we are not offered option to do as we like but rather be faithful to the mandate that have been handed to us by saints of old.

The purpose:

The author of the Book of Hebrews stated that, “The word of God is living and Active”...(Heb 4:12). So it is the primary source for **the ministers** of the word of God to be strengthened in their lives and ministries. The mental, emotional, spiritual, moral and social aspects of the ministers must be healthy by means of the word of God. The biblical mandate states that the resources for strengthening the ministers is the word of God. Thus it is reasonable to say that the only possible way to strengthen the ministers is to study the Bible with all what they could.

The Bible never state that it has to with life after death matter alone. Rather the biblical teachings are for now and here too in matters of death and life. Since being born again is a new beginning for **each believers** in Christ, he or she needs to build up his/ her spiritual life, physical life, mental life, emotional life, social life. Thus in order to build up his/ her totality, he or she must be rooted and grounded in the word of God. For Christian life is not built up in a matter of a day or two. Rather it is a life long development till we reach into the image of Christ.

No one is born as a grown-up man. Thus education has a vital place in the process of filling up **the need of discipleship** within Christian community. The Biblical teachings seem to advocate the fact about being trained and brought up in the school of discipleship at the feet of Jesus and his disciples and the saints of old. The growth and healthiness of the Church[the body of Christ] must be measured by her faithfulness and truthfulness toward the word of God, toward the world, toward the believers community and toward one another. In order to do so the primary element is church and personal discipleship and discipline in all areas of life as a Godly person.

To be called the followers of Jesus Christ is not a matter of opinion or preference. Rather it is a matter of decision and dedication toward the person and work of Jesus Christ. In other words, Christian means being identified with Jesus Christ in all in all. Thus the Lord did not offer the

option for being his disciples. On the other hand, we all are expected to be like him in life and work. So in order to follow the **footsteps of Jesus**, we do need a better understanding, a better knowledge, a better method about how to be a good disciple of Jesus Christ in Christian walks of life. For the best example has been already set before us. Our duty is to follow that footstep that has gone before us no matter what happens in life.

The **Great Commission** ends up in just one word that is “Teach them”(Mtt28:20), in terms of transmitting so that it would transform the believers as well as the whole world. The ever changing world does need the never changing word of God that transform human civilization and human destiny too. Thus the Biblical mandate demands simply carry on the great commission to each generation and for each generation with urgency. Since the means, the resources, and elements are at our disposal, we ought to keep going and doing out our task by all means.

Within the Christian education circle, there are much researches about how to improve or what to do with ministries. Books, seminar, workshop and field trip have been conducted in relation to improving Christian education. The basic question which has been asked to all is “How to improve or how to share the eternal truth to the contemporary world without crucifying the biblical truth?” When there is no improvement as it ought to be in Christian life, in special reference to the ministers, they could not carry out their ministries as they ought to do.

The Limitation:

As the result of interviewing more than 20 ministers in the rural area/ countryside of Myanmar[Ino-Burma bordering line], the primary concern for uplifting Christian higher education ought to be the main object for promoting and propagating Christianity as a whole. In other words, all the ministers concerned are aware of the ever demanding **educational function** in the postmodern world. Thus the how, the when and the where for improving our Christian higher education is the ongoing responsibilities of the Christians.

The countryside ministers were as a matter of fact, without [M.Div. or Th.M] rather [Th.B, Certificate in Biblical studies] in their theological training with little knowledge of secular world. Thus the learning, the education, the information, the reflection of their **formal education** was so limited and some of them have never been in secular university nor even high school. When the education level was so low, then the primary problem is too simple that they could not cope with the modern trend in their ministries. In order to compete with the secular world, each of the ministers must be well trained, well informed and well prepared in his or her education background. Thus most of them tend to say that they could not do any higher studies.

The second troublesome problem for the ministers is **lacking of resources** for and of the ministries. While it is a matter of financial shortcomings that broke their resources, at the same time, the language and literature problems are unable to overcome in the long term since most of them hardly speak, write or talk in any other language other than their own mother tongue. For there is no vital book or reference books that they could depend on for the ministry as well as for personal study. Thus this limitation hinders a great deal in the ministries.

When a person think himself/herself in term of disability, the natural outcome is not seeing the **opportunity** that he or she has in life or ministry. In other words, inferior complex blinds the mind, the eyes, the heart and the energy that he or she has. When unable to see or observe the proper moment or opportunity, most of the ministers end up in loss of God given opportunity. When the opportunity is missing, then all things go apart and in no way of reorientation.

The lacking of the personal, the resources and the opportunity cause the inability to meet the need of the flocks. In other words, lacking of the essential elements result in un-availability for and of the given ministries. At the same time, it causes to think of un-importance conception even about the ministries that they all are in. Thus it is express in **lacking of personal availability** at any circumstance no matter what happen in life or ministries.

One of the most important issues for doing ministry is **personal commitment**. When there is no proper education, lacking of resources for doing ministry could not cope up with the opportunity and unable to carry on the task of of ministry can easily turn a person into losing of the commitment hat he/she made at the moment he/she dedicates life for the ministry. When there is no zeal or vision, personal commitment is a matter of business and never minding of the high calling of God for the furtherance of the gospel.

The Conclusion/The Remedy:

The basic or intense question that we as the Christians need to address our selves is “Are we carrying out the Great Commission[the second part] in terms of promoting teaching ministry? In other words, how far we accomplish the unfinished task that our Lord commanded us to do? In order to answer this simple question, what we need to know is the basic elements that demand Christian higher education, if you wish higher studies. Can we meet the primary resources for doing ministry for the country preachers? Can we make regular contact with those ministers by means of prayers? How far do we really know their problems and shortcomings in life and ministries and know for sure of the why of those things? What would be done for them, if they come up with their own problems and limitations? Can there be possible way to meet the basic need of those ministers? How can we support them to do their higher studies in their own country rather than sending them to abroad?