A NEW MILESTONE OF EDUCATION
From Greco-Roman and Jewish Education to Church Education

In the Greco-Roman society of the first century, formal education was not popular at all; even formal public education funded by the government was very limited. At that time, education was mainly provided in private schools or through private tutoring. However, the poor peasant families generally could not afford to send their children to school. The responsibility therefore rested with the family, as the parents and the relatives took charge of teaching their children the skill set needed for work and developing their moral characters. It was also quite common to see the teaching of skills conducted in a master-apprentice model in many job markets.

Generally speaking, the education system of the Greco-Roman society could be divided into three levels at that time: the elementary stage, middle school and the university stage. The works of the poet Homer was the primary texts of their study during this stage. The university stage focused on the study of rhetoric, law, philosophy or a science. Students were taught how to study and express ideas effectively. Expressive reading and analysis of poetry, and the focus would be put on grammar, copying, recitation and arithmetic. Once in middle school, students needed to learn the Greek alphabets, basic reading skills, and mathematics, where students needed to learn the Greek alphabets, basic reading skills, and mathematics. The elementary stage focused on the teaching of language and the students were taught to copy, recite and translate texts.

In the Jewish society of the first century, the home provided the primary source of education for children. The synagogue served as the social center of the Jewish community, providing basic education for their children. Their teaching placed a heavy emphasis on the Torah in order that the children knew how to obey God’s law. In a Jewish society, the rabbis all played a role in education.

Nevertheless, whether it is the Greco-Roman or the Jewish society, the educator still has the most significant influence on their students. Teachers possess a wealth of knowledge and wisdom that is passed on to the next generation to help them overcome challenges and doubts. In the area of ethics and morality, family education plays the most important role. As parents place an immense emphasis on the development and maturity of their children’s character, they essentially are the educators who deeply influence their own children.

Learning about self and world affairs in the community of truth

In the letter to Titus, Paul gives him guidelines on how to educate believers, stressing how believers of different ages and genders (older men [2:2], older women [2:3], younger women [2:4], young men [2:6]) and those who are slaves should remain in proper order. These teachings are very similar to the household codes being used by the Greco-Roman families at the time. The main difference, however, is that Christians build their lives on the foundation of God’s “trustworthy message”, meaning the “good” doctrine [1:9, 13; 2:1, 3].

The development of believers’ life in church is inseparable from how they live at home. This fully demonstrates that education well received and knowledge obtained can indeed create and establish a community, in which cultivation and continuous nurture are necessary.

Paul further urges Titus to be faithful in teaching the believers, and stay true to what he teaches (2:1, 6, 15). This is because Paul is well aware that example is better than precept - an educator who teaches by example has a profound and long-lasting impact on the lives of his students.

In his book “To Know as We Are Known”, American educator Parker J. Palmer points out that the purpose of education is to create a sacred space in which the community of truth is practiced (page xii). Truth in itself is not objective and outward, but relevant to oneself and others. For example, when it comes to “critical thinking”, it can be used as a model for civic participation. On the other hand, the topic of “tolerance of ambiguity” can be taught as a way to listen to others without losing one’s own voice (page xvii). It is only through knowing ourselves in the truth that we can see and hear the real picture of this world (page 60). This is the proper philosophy and practice of education the church groups and Christian schools should adopt.

Titus 2:11-12 says, “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.”
The saving grace of God has brought about a brand new era of education. This encompasses repentance and conversion, and a thoroughly new way of life based on three fundamental attitudes.

Cultivating and practicing a new life attitude under grace

First of all, we need to live a disciplined life. The term “discipline” ( oudépouov) appears 16 times in the original text of the New Testament with the same root word. Of these, 10 are used in the epistles. The term refers to one’s ability to exert self-control and do things sensibly with proper caution. According to a study by contemporary educator Paul Tough, character building (rather than intelligence!) is actually the most important factor of a child’s future development and one’s success in the society. 5 Grit and self-control top the list of the key character traits of students who succeed.

Secondly, we need to seek a life of justice - conduct ourselves with equality and justice, while treating others with impartiality and integrity. As defined by the famous modern educator and psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg in his study of moral development, moral growth can be divided into six stages. The last stage of these is Principled Conscience. 6 To Paul, the measuring rod of justice comes from the sound doctrine of God’s Word, which is used to educate our conscience and guide our daily behavior. It is noteworthy that both of the above aspects need to be cultivated through the nurture of a community.

The last aspect is to live a godly life. The term “godly” appears 15 times in the New Testament, 10 of which are in the pastoral epistles. In the contemporary Greco-Roman world, the concept of godliness did not only refer to our attitude toward God, but also to our obligations toward family members. And this further extends to the attitude of respect and sincerity that we should adopt towards each other. Therefore, a godly lifestyle is what a person should seek in one’s relationship with God and others.

Paul advises us to exercise self-discipline, to do justice, and to respect God and people. As we live under the grace of God and remain nurtured in the Christian community, let us continue to grow in maturity while living out the truth and bearing good testimony to our society.


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What is the purpose of studying history? This question is not new to me as a history lecturer. Judging from the students’ responses in class, one could almost conclude that most people do perceive history as a useless subject. For this reason, I am determined to seize every opportunity to change people’s mindset about history before the end of the course.

One way to achieve this goal is to let others see that I truly love this subject. I would embrace history with passion and charm my audience with eloquence. Or try my best to get them to feel the fun of it, at least once.

Another way is to start with current issues, looking back for lessons that we can learn from the past, looking forward for trends in future development. This is essentially practise what the Italian historian Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) said: – “All history is contemporary history.” It will help people to see that history is very much alive and has a direct influence on today and tomorrow. Your attitude toward history is a true reflection of your attitude toward the present.

Experience tells me that the above methods are actually effective, as essays written by most students indicate a very clear awareness of issues they are facing. In fact, the more intense and severe the social changes and turbulence become, the more they drive people to look back to history and reality intently and thoroughly.

In addition, history also produces tremendous value through its process of reappearing, reconstructing and recollecting to establish identity. I personally experienced how documented history had such a huge impact on the identity of people: in 2007, the 10th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to China, while I was still new to Hong Kong. From my conversations with a few Hong Kong friends, I was astounded by how they identified more with Britain than China. So I began my study from history education approach, trying to understand the identity differences between the two sides.

“All history is contemporary history”

During the period of British governance, “Hong Kong’s local history education was characterized by an education model based on moderate colonialism: After the riot broke out in 1967, the Hong Kong-British government euphemistically suppressed the sprouting of the awareness of Chinese nationalism, hindering the normal development of Chinese history education.”7 This tactic of “ingeniously neglect”8 has led to a lack of knowledge on national history among most Hong Kong people.

Before the handover, Hong Kong secondary schools used the curriculum adopted in 1982 for Chinese History. Its education purpose included three dimensions, namely knowledge, ability and attitude. Attitude here referred to “developing an objective attitude toward things” and “cultivating good character”. After the handover, a new curriculum was adopted in 1997. In addition to the previous content, it also included “a sense of ethnic and national belonging, and responsibility toward the society.”9 The agenda of ethnic and national belonging could not be more obvious here. Comparing with the “1997 curriculum”, one could see that the syllabuses in the “1982 curriculum” for Secondary 1 (through Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties) and Secondary 2 (through the Ming Dynasty) do not have many changes. However, the content of the textbooks for Secondary 3 (Qing Dynasty and modern contemporary history) has been significantly expanded. Its structure is very much the same as the history textbooks used by junior high schools in Mainland China.8

Mainland China has always emphasized history education, outlining a very clear narrative framework for the period of modern history: For more than a hundred years since the Opium War in 1840, China went through a period of domination and humiliations by foreign nations → people with lofty ideals rose against foreign powers and defended China → the rise of
Communism established a new China, leading the Chinese people to finally stand up. The government makes it clear that the purpose of patriotic education is to "cultivate the students' passion toward the Chinese Communist Party" at the stage of elementary school; and at junior high, to "recognize that it was only through the founding of Marxism-Leninism and the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party that the Chinese revolution was deemed truly successful. This is also to realize from the course of historical development that there would not be a new China without the Communist Party." It is imperative to teach during class that "China's social development reveals the historical inevitability that Chinese people can only stand up when they take on the road of socialism under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. And by then we can turn into a great, modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic and culturally advanced."¹

For this reason, I firmly believe that the country somehow used history education as a long-term “naturalization” strategy in response to those Hong Kong people who still did not accept the return to the motherland at that time. The change of re-categorizing Chinese History from Liberal Studies to an independent subject last year reveals the obvious intent of the authorities. They hope to start with history education, subtly and imperceptibly re-nationalizing Hong Kong people. How can the students not care about giving the standard answers when they know the score of Chinese History is now included in the assessment of the public examination, which is critical to their future? Under the current commanding examination system, the history essentially tailored, weaved and contextualized by the will of the state will be engraved deeply on the students’ hearts, whether they like it or not — so deep that they would blurt it out when necessary, despite the passage of time and the vicissitudes of life. It is undeniable that the identity of men is constantly being constructed.

"Remember your name or you won’t be able to go home!"

In the famous work Spirited Away by Hayao Miyazaki, White Dragon makes an intriguing remark to the young girl Chihiro: “Remember your name or you won’t be able to go home!” As Christians, we are sojourners on the earth, our Christian identity is constructed in the history of salvation.

Exodus is the narrative that shapes the identity of the Israelites as God’s people. Through Moses, God commanded them to observe the decrees, regulations and festivals. He urged the elders to be prepared when asked by their children, and tell them about God’s commands and how they had witnessed the work of God – “Only be careful, and watch commands and how they had witnessed the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.” (Deuteronomy 4:9)

And the narrative of the crucifixion is the core narrative of the people in the New Testament. Peter reminded the believers around the world for seven times that they already had this knowledge about salvation (“knowledge” in 2 Peter 1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; 2:20; 3:18). He advised them to “make every effort” (1:5, 10; 3:14), meaning trying their best to remember it in their hearts. His last wish was to “make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” (2 Peter 1:15)

Apparently, history is very important in the eyes of God. He invites men to enter into divine history, to educate and shape a new creation through divine historical narrative.

All the countries and tribes are writing and depicting their own histories, attempting to “imagine” the communities that distinguish “us” from “them”.¹¹ We need to make a choice in this, for it is not only relevant to the construction of identity, but more importantly, to the ultimate belonging and “homecoming”. A


not necessarily see or care.

of the underprivileged groups, which we may not about investment, but sacrificing the lives Kong become rich by investing. The problem is every year. I believe that many people in Hong enterprises distribute considerable dividend sum of the remaining 99%. In order to satisfy of 1% of the population is higher than the serious problem under globalization. The wealth reflected how income inequality has become a hard and still cannot make the ends meet. I doubtful of themselves, “I have worked so storm or flooding, the debt would accumulate make a living, many farmers borrow money to buy those seeds and fertilizers. When there is productivity with certain fertilizers”. In order to make a living, many farmers borrow money to buy those seeds and fertilizers. When there is storm or flooding, the debt would accumulate further. Facing such situation, the farmers are doubtful of themselves, “I have worked so hard and still cannot make the ends meet. I am really useless!” The high suicide rate not only indicated that they are desperate, but also reflected how income inequality has become a serious problem under globalization. The wealth of 1% of the population is higher than the sum of the remaining 99%. In order to satisfy the investors behind them, the multinational enterprises distribute considerable dividend every year. I believe that many people in Hong Kong become rich by investing. The problem is not about investment, but sacrificing the lives of the underprivileged groups, which we may not necessarily see or care.

Neighbor, to give and receive

Cat: Indeed. The message “you are what you earn” is embedded in Hong Kong society. If you are unemployed, then you are worthless. When people are often turned down in job interviews, they would develop a low self-esteem and would ask themselves, “Am I really that bad? Am I really not up to the standard? Why can’t I find a job with my previous salary level?” A WHO (World Health Organization) research pointed out that poverty can cause depression. Both are closely related. Moreover, they are not only poor financially, but also “poor in relationships”. They do not want to go out so to avoid comparison and disparagement. On the other hand, people would avoid meeting the poor for fear of subsidizing them in the long term. This is “social exclusion” - no connection and losing support.

Joanne: But the relationship network is really important! What is poverty? I immediately think of the faces of a group of Bangladeshi women who were sold by their husbands for sex work because of financial difficulties. When they returned home, they were still abused. They were the disadvantaged among the disadvantaged. They lost family support, and they could not accept themselves, which was even more miserable and difficult.

Cat: It would make a huge difference if someone would encourage them at this critical moment and let them feel that their life was connected to others. In fact, we do have the same need, don’t we? Over the years, we have seen many people whom they truly need is having someone walking with them and motivating them to go forward. We know that the value of human beings is in God and we understand that each person’s life is not only valuable, but also is capable of giving and contributing. For this reason, we often encourage people to volunteer, to care about their neighbors and establish a community network, for neighbor relationship is a vital and real “social capital”.

Joanne: At least they can unite and gain resilience in the face of adversity. In Sri Lanka, we have similar practices. We have set up support groups or cooperatives for farmers who grow spices. The scale varies from a dozen to nearly 100 people. In the past, they were forced to borrow high-interest loans that were difficult to pay back, just like the Indian farmers.
The churches may try their best to explore whether it is a one-time or a long-term support. A church extended the use of her Benevolence Fund to benefit people outside the church. They worked with us to launch a “Health Care Voucher Scheme” for poor elderly and single parent families in the district so that they do not have to go to the cross-district public hospitals for medical treatment when they are sick. We also encouraged intergenerational service by matching young believers and local elders. We organized the “Reunion Dinner at Home” and asked the young people to prepare dinner for the elderly before Chinese New Year. In fact, it is always good to donate a Mid-Autumn dinner, new clothes, or even a nice Nashi pear. I can never forget the excitement of a mother who handed the new clothes to her child and said, “We have never dreamed about this. This is the first time for us to have new clothes!” One neighbor held the volunteer tightly with both hands after the Mid-Autumn dinner and said, “This is my best meal in the whole year, thank you.” Perhaps some people may think that “it is a waste of money to dine in a restaurant”, but to our neighbors, this tiny happiness is a rare taste of being cherished. In the face of poverty, response to their needs is certainly the top priority. Yet poverty is not just an issue, it is about people and lives. This involves not only urban planning, such as facilities of new communities, but also resource allocation and social policy. The government needs to take the initiative and help people to start all over again.

**Change, in and out**

**Cat:** In fact, we are deeply moved by the brothers and sisters, who give out of a genuine heart. Sometimes when the donated items are too heavy or too big, they rented a truck and sent them directly to the recipients’ home. For a poor family with a monthly income of only HK$4,000, they have to work more than two hours to earn a truck rental fee of HK$75. Today, can we ever imagine that some people may have never been to the Hong Kong Island? There are children who have never been to a beach, some teenagers without an octopus card, people who do not use computer because they cannot afford the electricity bill, and the grassroots parents are discriminated by the school because they do not know how to pay the fees via electronic means. All these demonstrated the situation of marginalized intergenerational underprivileged families. Even if parents want the best for their children, their own self and their connections limit them. Therefore, we encourage more believers to become mentors who are willing to walk with the children to help them to explore new possibilities in their lives.

**Joanne:** In fact, the value today is about high efficiency, making quick money, pursuing rising GDP, and satisfying investors. We are so accustomed to these values. Has it worsened the disparity between the rich and the poor, and increased the population of the underprivileged? At the socio-cultural level, we really need to reflect and strive to find alternate ways to alleviate poverty. For example, the consumer movement is quite effective. In Bangladesh, the collapse of a factory that killed more than 1,000 people in 2013 has prompted consumer initiatives to require multinational fashion brands to face outsourcing problems. The Bangladesh government also reviewed the labor system and revised the minimum wage. This reminds us not to be a lazy consumer!

**Leap, Rich or Poor**

**Cat:** To change culture, believers can act as a mediator and inject new possibilities into Hong Kong society. When the political and business communities promote corporate social responsibility, the Christian bosses of small and medium enterprises may be more flexible in creating alternative cultures. If our spiritual community is alive, the relationship poverty will surely be overcome. I shall never forget a scene at the baptism of one of our neighbors. He was about to give his testimony, but he suddenly stopped and cried out loudly, “Thank you Jesus! It was Jesus who gave me the privileged status.” The moment I heard this, my tears were pouring out. He found his identity in the Lord through which became the driving force in his life. If we really regard one another as brothers and sisters, they really have a home.

1. Formerly known as The Hong Kong Squatter Evangelistic Fellowship, The Urban Peacemaker Evangelistic Fellowship (UPEF) was renamed in 2001.
2. A reusable contactless stored value smart card for making electronic payments in online or offline systems in Hong Kong.
Response

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Prayer Requests

1. Pray for the class of 2018, that God will grant those entering full time ministry a humble heart to serve in faithfulness wherever God places them. Pray also for those who have completed the evening part time programs. May God use them to integrate what they have learnt and to witness Christ in their workplace.

2. Pray for our students in field education assignments overseas, at local churches and para-church organizations during the summer. May God strengthen their passion for mission and pastoral ministry, and may the students experience new learning lessons.

3. Pray for our campus redevelopment project funding needs. The additional budget for 2018 is US$520,000.

General Fund Financial Report

Jan to Apr, 2018

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Outstanding mortgage loan as at Apr, 2018: US$1,530,509

Graduation Exercises and Dinner

The Forty-first Graduation Exercises was held at the Wing Kwong Pentecostal Holiness Church at 3:00pm on June 30, Saturday. Dr Anne Tsai, President of China Evangelical Seminary of Taipei, addressed the convocation. Graduation Dinner was held at U-Banquet in Kwun Tong, Kowloon, in that evening.

Faculty Engagements

- May 5-6: Dr Pan Yi-Jung accepted an invitation from Hong Kong Evangelical Yan Din Church to lead a workshop on cultivating personal growth.
- May 8: Dr. Bernard Wong attended the “Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia” in Kyoto, Japan. He also shared a message at the workshop “When China Becomes a Global Power: A Dialogue within the greater China”.
- June 5 and 12: Dr Xue Xiaxia accepted an invitation from Ta Po Baptist Church to preach at a seminar on “Studying Old Testament with Paul.”
- June 6: Dr Joyce Sun was invited by Christian Faith and Development Centre of The Education University of Hong Kong to preach at their Lunch Time Seminar. “How can “bitter” be a little bit “sweet”? was the topic of the seminar.
- June 8: Dr Raymond Au accepted an invitation from China Baptist Theological Seminary to lead a seminar on counselling and pastoral ministry in marriage and family issues.
- June 11-18: Dr Pan Yi-Jung was invited by Nanjing Union Theological Seminary to teach at their Doctor of Ministry program, during which she also supervised doctoral students on their research thesis.
- June 16: Dr Bernard Wong preached at the CGST 2018 North America Revival Seminar in Edmonton Chinese Community Church in Edmonton, Canada. The revival seminar was live broadcasted and record broadcasted to 24 churches in 17 cities in Canada and the US.
- June 20: Dr Wong shared a message on Internet Marketplace retreat camp.

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The School will only collect personal information that is necessary for us to support our course(s) and school administrative activities.