

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the conversations we've had the past two days, sparked by the webinar lecture given by Dr. Yohanna Katanacho.

On Wednesday, we learned from one another a great deal about specific cultural contexts and challenges in Jamaica, Malaysia, Uganda, and the USA and discussed several issues that confront Christians as they seek to love their neighbors with justice:

1. How might the church welcome and integrate recent Chinese immigrants around the world, particularly in Jamaica and some African countries? These immigrants often are seen as part of a "neo-imperialistic" agenda of exploitation, even if they themselves as individuals are simply trying to earn a wage for themselves and their families. Working for structural justice for both Chinese and non-Chinese workers and showing the love of Christ to individuals (for instance, by recruiting Chinese-speaking missionaries to teach the Gospel and by taking the time to be good neighbors) are needed.
2. How do we better teach children and young adults not to hate or avoid those who are different (and differences are multiple: tribal, ethnic, racial, religious, denominational) but also to be firmly grounded in their Christian faith? How do we talk well about truth and respect? We talked further about the origins of eschatological pro-Israel/anti-Palestinian attitudes in the global church; about the problems in educational systems that put too high a premium on memorization and tests, rather than on flexibility, thinking, creativity, and learning from experience; about the urgent need to model for young people ways of interacting well with others—which means that we need to seek out ways to be *with* those who are different from ourselves, being truly present alongside them; about designing educational programs that are life-giving rather than those that lead to high levels of suicide among students; about designing Bible curricula that give students the tools to understand the scripture and to be led to Christ, rather than simply to store up biblical knowledge untethered from love of God and wise action.
3. How do we ground all our interactions with others on the biblical principle of *Imago Dei*—the image of God in all people? Pedagogically, students are not passive containers to be stuffed with information but rather creative humans, made in God's image. How can our pedagogy better taken into account the *imago dei* in each student? In interactions even with horribly violent or abusive individuals, we must remember that they too are made in God's image and have the capacity to be restored to that image in Jesus Christ, to come back to being not just an image bearer (creation), but also a child of God (redemption). We must train ourselves and our students to see every human being as a precious image bearer and not reduce them to some aspect of their behavior.

On Thursday, we focused our attention on the nature of the university and what is needed in order to develop a global cadre of Christian scholar-teachers. In our discussion we noted the following:

1. Although the modern global university may still understand itself largely as a producer of knowledge (both in research and in the training of students), Christians ought to understand higher education as a formative process, with the goal of inculcating wisdom and equipping both faculty and students to live wisely and well in the world. One example: Mandated courses in the Bible taught at Christian universities need to be redesigned to lead students to Christ, not to give biblical knowledge for its own sake; following Dr. Katanacho's lead (and Augustine's), the Bible is read correctly only when it leads to Christ, so we mis-shape scripture when we teach it any other way. Another example: when Christian scholars live in regions that have been wracked by war and other forms of havoc and have experienced themselves, and are surrounded by others who have experienced, severe injustice, it is incumbent on them not to retreat into an aloof university structure, but rather to seek justice in the right ways—speaking in public forums, writing opinion pieces, teaching their students about ethics and justice, and so forth. Christian scholars need to be encouraged and supported to write "public scholarship" as well as articles and books directed to other academics. As in the allegory of Plato's cave, the one who ventures out and sees the sun must return to those still in the cave and try to convince them of what he/she has seen—even at the cost of bafflement, rejection, or persecution.
2. As Christian scholar-teachers, we need to live integrated, not segmented lives. Our research and our teaching must lead to Christ [who is the Wisdom of God] and to a "civilization of love." We need to inspire passion in ourselves and our students: if young terrorists are willing to endure four years of

training in order to become suicide bombers, we ought to be equally passionate about training that helps our communities to come alive. Our universities need to become places of gift and blessing.

3. We cannot become mature and passionate Christian teacher-scholars by ourselves. We need sustained community to develop Christian worldview in all areas, to learn how to teach our classes in deeply Christian ways, and to form a strategy for having a Christian voice in society. None of these are easy to do; all require a lifetime of commitment and humble learning, with others of like mind and heart. Here we used a number of images: synergy, formation, integration, ecology, humility. We noted the need to develop programs beyond single webinars or small group discussions to train and develop Christian scholar-teachers within a flexible curriculum that (drawing on Wednesday's discussion) honors the *imago dei* of each person and the diversity of cultures, histories, and spiritual gifts.

Within this rich array of ideas, personal stories, suggestions, and commentary that we have shared, I hope one step will emerge for each of us: one person with whom to initiate or continue a conversation; one neglected neighbor to visit; one module in one class redesigned to honor the image of God in each student and lead him/her to see Christ; one... your creativity and imagination will complete the clause.

Blessings on each of you and on your work,
Susan

P.S. from the INCHE office:

- The next Society of Christian Scholars (SCS) webinar on October 15 at 1400 GMT/UTC is: *Building STEM Teacher Capacity through the Practical Education Network*. INCHE-hosted discussions will follow on October 28 and 29. Webinar registration is at: <https://scshub.net/webinars/building-stem-teacher-capacity-through-the-practical-education-network-thursday/>