



# THE DIGITAL TURN IS HERE!!!

**By: Dr. Steve Pardue**

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In the scope of human history, the digital turn represents a monumental, if not a singular shift in the way we communicate, interact, and work. Not a single element of our lives have remained untouched as even our fundamentally physical activities, like eating, sleeping, dating—and yes, even church!—have been altered by digital technologies. This revolution was already working its way through our societies for years before the pandemic, but the last two and a half years have been an enormous accelerant, speeding up our adoption of new technologies in every aspect of life.

So it is fitting that the consultation committee selected as the topic for this year "The Digital Turn in Theological Education: Impact, Challenges, and Opportunities." At the heart of this topic is the question: how is the digital turn transforming the environment for theological education, and how can our schools, churches, and communities respond wisely to it?

## Day 1

Our opening night, Dr. Heidi Campbell offered an overview of the research done so far about the impact of the digital turn on religious communities. She noted how the pandemic forced rapid adoption of digital technology in religious communities, and argued that "religious groups should consider testing and

continuing digital practices beyond the current crisis. Integrating tech in religious communities," she shared, "will require a team-based approach that empowers 'digital creatives.'"

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*Dr. Lua (center) with the panelists (L-R: Arun Kumar, So Young Kang, Prof. Jimmy Chan, and Dr. Kyung Hwa Hong) for the opening night.*

In their responses, the panel offered several illuminating responses. So Young-Kang helped us to consider the possibility that the digital turn may help us improve the often sub-optimal learning processes we use in seminaries and churches, especially by making learning interactive, social, and empowering. Arun Kumar helped us to view the digital turn as a development both similar to and distinct from the revolutions of steam and electricity that preceded it. Hong Kyunghwa helped us to consider how digital tools have been both helpful and challenging for the field of counseling. And Jimmy Chan reminded us that we must approach technology with the fear of God, considering how it may be shaping our hearts.

The key takeaway from this first set of presentations for me was this: that whether we like it or not, the digital turn is here. The question is not whether to engage, but how.

## Day 2

On Day 2, we turned our focus to one aspect of the “how”: the ways that we might use technologies to pursue holistic formation, both in theological education, and in the church. Dr. Sarinah Lo helped us to see that every technological decision shapes our instruction and our student formation. To use the tools of the digital era well, we need fresh imagination to reframe pedagogy in terms of love for truth and love for neighbors, especially our students. Dr. Lai Pak Wah, meanwhile, helped us to see that while we might initially see many problems with new technological tools, we must remember that education was in fact broken in many ways prior to the digital turn. In this change, we should find new opportunities to repair and renew it. The next set of

plenaries on Day 2 focused on the church. Rei Crizaldo called us to reframe our discussions of the digital turn. Rather than complaining about its challenges, we should see this as an opportunity for the Majority World church to contribute to a reshaping of theological education into something more in touch with grassroots Christianity. Dr. Finny Philip urged us to remember the biblical images for the church, and in light of these, to consider how we might reconceive the church’s identity and mission in the digital age. Complementing these messages, Dr. Imad Shehadeh pointed out that our imperfect experience of digitally-mediated church gatherings is an echo of our longing for the perfect, embodied fellowship we will one day experience in the new heavens and earth.

My takeaway from Day 2 was this: In the digital turn, God is on the move among his people. But so also are the enemies of the church. In this moment, the power of the Spirit in the digital age is speaking for those with ears to hear. These are the gifts of God for his people, capable of nurturing faith, catalyzing the proclamation of the gospel, and forming people in the way of Jesus.

So the digital turn is not an enemy or mere obstacle. In fact, it may be an opportunity to unlearn bad habits (e.g., poorly conceived theological education that is focused only on the mind; schooling models that are not actually effective; unhelpfully dualistic conception of the universe). It is by no means an ultimate good; but it is unquestionably a temporal good that is available for our use.

At the same time, the digital world is populated by other spirits, including the “Prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2, KJV). This means that in addition to being a gift, technology is also a burden and a curse. It can



*Plenary session 3. Panelists Dr. Imad Shehadeh (left), Mr. Rei Lemuel Crizaldo (center), and Dr. Finny Philip (right) converse on shaping a holistic theology of church in a digital age*

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disorder our loves and undermine God's good designs for us. It can be weaponized by the enemy to blind, deter, and injure God's people.

### Day 3

On Day 3, we focused on witness and discipleship in the digital age. Dr. James Hwang showed us that we are living through days of enormous and rapid transition, complete with pigs who can be controlled through microchips. Like generations before us, we must not only look to use new tools wisely, but perhaps more importantly, as technology becomes more autonomous, we must consider how to shape the tools themselves to conform with Christian ethics.

Next, Dr. Ivor Poobalan helped us to see the digital turn as an opportunity in at least two ways: first, to address the greatest failure of the church in the last century—a failure of discipleship, which must be a whole-life and lifelong turn toward Jesus. Second, to engage in a new frontier for missions. Like the early church, which included the Gentiles and refused to force them into the mold of Jewish culture and law, we must view the digital world as a mission field and consider how to reach its citizens in contextually suitable ways.

Finally, Dr. Calvin Chong helped us to see that we need to think more about the nature of our presence in virtual spaces. Content is important, to be sure, but so also is the nature of our students' experience. We need to grow beyond lectures and videos to an environment that fosters active participation and collaboration from students. We should take advantage of accessible, affordable tools to up our game and pursue excellence in this area.

My takeaway from Day 3 was this: We should consider the digital turn to be a unique opportunity for strengthening the church's witness, mission, and discipleship.

### Days 4 and 5

On Day 4, we considered the potential trade-offs and downsides of the digital turn. Dr. Alexander Chow reminded us that every "upgrade" or "update" is also a downgrade, with something lost alongside the new features gained. Yet the story of our faith is of consistent adaptation of technology—the written word, the printing press, even language itself—each of these are technologies that we have leveraged in our favor.

Because Christians are committed to the principle of living like Jesus, rejecting digital culture is simply not an option. Like our savior, we are called to go where the people are, to live with them, to speak as they speak, and to demonstrate the transforming power of Christ in their digital vernacular.

In his response, Dr. Stephen George affirmed the necessity of engaging the digital world, which is here to stay. But he urged to engage our digital tools with wisdom and discernment, knowing that all technology is oriented toward specific ends. These ends are sometimes at odds with the orientation of Christian discipleship. For example, we must be mindful in the digital age of the special temptation to neglect the body. The human creature is designed for embodied existence—both now and in eternity—and our redemption rests on the irreplaceable power of a broken body and spilled blood. This truth must be preserved in the digital turn, even if it becomes a source of counter-cultural offense.

My takeaway from Day 4 was that our engagement with the digital turn must be shaped by both the gospel and the church's history.

Finally on Day 5, we had an incredible set of presentations from SAIACS in India, ATS in the Philippines, BBS in Thailand, PTEE in Jordan, and SBC in Singapore. Each case study helped us to see how to put the general lessons we've learned this week to work. Each of our contexts in our various schools is unique. But my takeaway from Day 5 is that when we collaborate, we can learn so much, and save so much time and wasted effort!

### Conclusion

In reflecting on this week's discussions, the text that rings most resonantly for me is 1 Cor 9. There, Paul reflects on his rights as an apostle, appointed by God for his work of reconciliation, which rightly brings with it privileges. But he willingly lays these privileges aside for the sake of mission. Applying his argument in our context, we might rephrase:

*Am I not free to neglect the digital turn? Have I not already put in years and years of study in my subject area, learned Greek and Hebrew, mastered the art of the journal article, and made contributions to my field? Have I not the right to teach as I was taught, and to reuse my excellent lecture notes year after year without change?*

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...  
But I do not make use of this right to the comforts of an analog-only scholarly life. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the digital natives, I become as a digital native, collaborating live with my students; to those in the metaverse, I have taught as an avatar, that I might win them. To those with short attention spans, I embraced micro-learning. And to those who lack access to the digital world or remain

alienated by it, I have laid aside my clever technology and ministered to them in person, while still applying what I have learned about adult learning strategies from my ICETE Academy classes. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

I pray that this would be our commitment as teachers, leaders, and learners in the years ahead. May it be so. ♦

## ATA GA Photo Gallery



The ATA Board with Dr. Shao, Regional Secretary of ATA North America (left), and Dr. Imad Shehadeh (left most), who prayed for the ATA Executive Board after the business meeting.



Members of the CAED, AGST Council, and the Publications committee (standing) along with a few members of ATA's executive board (seated).



Above: The GA Planning committee (L-R: Mr. Rei Lemuel Crizaldo, Drs. Theresa Lua, Sooi Ling Tan, and Chia Choon)



Left: The Lord blessed us with more than 200 participants to fill the session hall.





Clay art produced from Tuesday's devotion on hope amid the never ending challenges of our times.



On the third day of the GA, the participants had the opportunity to relax, enjoy Penang and each other's company through an organized tour. The group visited Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary, Heritage Area, and Gurney Drive.



What better way to end this year's GA than with spirit-filled worship and communion? We praise God for how He has moved mightily in and through this year's General Assembly.

# A Theology of the Body for Digital Theological Education<sup>[1]</sup>

By Dr. Stephen George

President, Asian Christian Academy, India - Evangelical Theological Seminary, India



We can often look at the changes in digital culture and feel as if it is changing too fast and be wary of its social effects. Much of the criticism regarding digital technology and its social effects have merit. But digital culture is here to stay. As it relates to theological education, we need to look at digital culture as an extension of the ecosystem of theological education.

However, in this brief, I want to point us to a healthy caution on our engagement with digital technology. On one hand, we need to move away from the either-or debate between digital theological education and in-person education. In “From the Garden to the City: The Place of Technology in the City of God”, John Dyer argues that it is more helpful to look at digital technologies as modes of embodiment rather than disembodied interaction. Digital Theological Education is here to stay. But I also want us to do so with this caution: And that is; “Don’t forget about our bodies”

The incarnation of Christ involved him becoming fully human and our humanity is more than our bodies. But it is also not less than our bodies.

Dr. Lua mentioned how refreshing it was to have this conference in-person after two years of the pandemic. The idea of having another online conference was probably more traumatic than encouraging, reminding us of the scourge of the pandemic.

At the same time, for this conference, we have utilized digital technologies to broaden our access to experts in this area who could not be with us in person. During the pandemic we were extremely grateful for the technologies that allowed us to continue education and communication in the midst of global lockdowns. Imagine if this pandemic occurred in 1985? What would we have done then?

Bought cameras the size of a torso and mailed VHS tapes to our students? The impact on education of all types would have been suffered irreparable harm. So, digital technology was a saving grace during the pandemic.

But as soon as in-person learning became possible, many of us switched back, at least in India. We are now of course integrating these technologies with more intentionality and design than we had during the pandemic.

While we were grateful for what these technologies afforded us during the pandemic, we all felt something was missing. It wasn’t just the technical snafus.

We are human beings created with bodies. These bodies are central to our formation of culture, our history, our identity, formation of our community and formation of meaning. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book “Metaphors we live by” argue for an embodied nature of cognition. They demonstrated that metaphors live in the realm of concept rather than in mere linguistic code and that construction of meaning requires our bodies at the center of the meaning matrix.

We need to think theologically about how our bodies play a role in our theological education. Pope John Paul II advanced a “Theology of the Body” in the context of sexual and gender identity. We need a “Theology of the Body” as it relates to digital culture.

Let’s just review a few axioms we affirm as evangelicals regarding the body:

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<sup>[1]</sup> This article is the modified response of Dr. Stephen George to the presentation of Dr. Chow during the recent General Assembly.

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### **1. We were created in the image of God with a body**

The special creation of mankind, both men and women, involved a creation with bodies with an organic connection to God in our bodies through his breath which gave us life. It was in these bodies that we were designed to experience God.

### **2. Our bodies carry with it the scars of sin and death**

The church is best defined by how it treats the vulnerable. We recognize that Christ's ministry to the vulnerable was to all of us. We care for the vulnerable because we were once the vulnerable but are now empowered by the new creation in Christ. We continue his work to care for the afflicted, which they experience in their bodies. By body, I am not separating the mind and spirit from the body but, rather looking at them holistically. Digital technologies have created opportunities that allow us to reach out to many who are suffering. But much of our care for the suffering needs our bodily presence, to empathize fully. Our bodies matter, in communicating that we are with you, we want to carry your pain with you.

My wife leads an autism ministry with the Asian Christian Academy. And during the lockdown, they reverted to online therapy to ensure that the children with autism would not regress in their learned behaviors. The online therapy was a success, as the children charted continued progress through the pandemic. But as soon as the situation allowed for in-person sessions, most came back. I asked her why they were willing to travel for an hour or two, one way, for the in-person therapy.

She said that it was hard to maintain an emotional connection with the child and the parent online. It was hard to feel the pain of the parents online and empathize with their struggles online. We can't minimize the power of that hand on the shoulder and ability to emote strongly in the presence of others.

Our emotions are not disconnected from our bodies. Our bodies are critical to our ability to emote and make connections. Empathy, critical for pastoral care, is far stronger in physical presence.

### **3. Our bodies play a key role in the Christian story**

The victory of the cross is a victory over sin and death. A victory Christ won with his body. In our engagement with the suffering world we proclaim the hope of the redemption of our bodies. In Rom 8:23

and 2 Cor 5:2 Paul talks about our groaning, awaiting this redemption, awaiting for us to be clothed.

I confess, I had a groaning of my own with regular zoom classes and Sunday meetings during the pandemic. I was groaning for the day to meet my family members face to face. The pandemic made me realize something I took for granted.

### **That our bodies matter.**

They matter in how we view ourselves as humans and even as technologies increase our level of embodied engagement, we can't accept the ideology of some transhumanists who envision a reality without the body where we can simply upload our brains and exist in the digital. We are technologically far from such a reality.

But as we have heard from many speakers, technology is not neutral. If we're not careful, a form of neo-doceticism can creep in. All technology is shaped within a set of ideologies. And it is imperative on us, as Christian theologians, to seek explicitly Christian ends and even seek to shape technology according to our theology.

### **What does this mean for theological education?**

We need to ensure our digital theological education is shaped by the gospel's vision for our humanity.

A naïve view of technology as merely a tool, will end up with technology shaping us along the ideologies that underly them.

For example, we probably need to think closely about how the use of Avatars in the metaverse affects issues like body dysmorphia. We already have a precursor of this phenomenon in Instagram and Tiktok with filters and how they are being used to project certain socially valued constructions of the body. What kind of digital anthropology maintains the gospel vision for human bodies in the metaverse?

I think we should not only look forward, but also look back to find the path of digital theological education. Any step forward needs to be connected to the ancient faith and its practices, passed on to us.

We need a both-and approach to digital theological education. A traditional location where physical presence is enacted in our Christian communities is the local church. I suggest that digital theological education can offer a kind of upgrade with a collaboration with local churches. Can we leverage technology to create a "networked theology"

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# A Gift to the ATA Community and the Asian Church: Asia Puts its hope in You



Sometimes, the most amazing things happen over a cup of coffee! Well, that certainly is true for us in the ATA community- and one very tangible proof of that is the newly launched song “Asia Puts Its Hope in You”. The idea behind the song was conceived 2 years ago, during a conversation, over a cup of coffee- and it has now come into fruition and was so well received by the ATA community.

And now, the people behind “Asia Puts its hope in You”, Dr. Sooi Ling Tan, Dean of AGST Alliance, and professional Jazz Musician Mike Veerapen, are giving this song as a gift to the ATA community. So, below you will find the sheet music to the song and in the following link, the audio recording of the song in different languages. And as a bonus, we are also giving you the chorus and bridge lyrics in English, Hindi, Bahasa Indonesia, and Korean.

Please feel free to use this song in your schools and churches- and may it be a blessing to many more!

### Chorus and Bridge Lyrics:

Chorus:

#### Asia puts its hope in you

Asia ki asha tu hai Prabhu

Kami harap pada mu

亞洲盼望在於你

아시아는 주께 소망해

#### Asia puts its hope in you

Asia ki asha tu hai Yeshu

Dan berindung pada Mu

亞洲盼望在於你

아시아는 주께 소망해

#### God of love and boundless grace

Premi aur kripalu hai tu

Agar nyata di Asia

神慈愛無盡恩惠

사랑과 넘치는 은혜

#### God with us, our hiding place

Tuj mein hum mein tu hai Prabhu

Rahmat dan anug'rah Mu

神同在，藏身之處

우리과 함께 계시네

Bridge 1:

#### And His promises, secure

Tu hi tu Prabhu hai Bhalla

Untuk s'lama-lamanya

祂應許永不落空

주님의 약속 소망해

Bridge 2:

#### Hallelujah, Singing Hallelujah

Hallelujah, Gaate Hallelujah

Halleluyah, Nyanyi Halleluyah

哈利路亞，歌唱 哈利路亞

알렐루야, 알렐루야

#### For the Lord is good, His Love endures

Keval tera pyaar hai Bhalla

S'bab Tuhan baik dan anug'rahNya

因主的美善，祂的愛長存

선하신 주 영원한 사랑

#### And His promises, secure

Tu hi tu Prabhu hai Bhalla

Untuk s'lama-lamanya

祂應許永不落空

주님의 약속 소망해

Listen here:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0S6D0bB77WfATIRJnDTrsF?si=834sFpQSveoHo6gXulWJg>

<https://anchor.fm/ata-digital/episodes/Asia-Puts-its-hope-in-You-e1pfjkd>



ASIA PUTS ITS HOPES IN YOU

MUSIC BY MICHAEL VEERAPEN  
 LYRIS BY TAN SOOI LING

**A VERSE**

C- Ab Bb C- WE WILL

C- G- F- Ab Bb

LIFT OUR PRAISE TO YOU O LORD... GIVE YOU THANKS AL - MIGH - TY GOD... KING OF KINGS AND RU - LER OF  
 DUST YOU CAME AND LIFT - ED US... PAID THE PRICE DE - LIV - ERED US... JE - SUS RE - DEEM - ER AND  
 OFF - ER UP TO YOU OUR LIVES... AS A LI - VING SAC - RI - FICE... WHO - LLY SUR - REN - DERED UN - TO

C- C- G-

ALL FRIEND YOU WE WILL LIFT OUR HEARTS TO WOR - SHIP YOU... GOD CRE - A - TOR ONE SO TRUE...  
 FROM OUR SHAME YOU CAME AND CO - VERED US... SPOKE NEW LIFE DE - FEND - ED US...  
 WE WILL RUN THE RACE AND FOLLOW YOUR WAYS... LOVE AND SERVE YOU ALL OUR DAYS...

F- Ab Bb C- **B CHORUS** Ab Bb

FOR - MED US AND CALL - ED US HIS OWN A - SIA PUTS ITS HOPE IN  
 GLO - RY AND THE LIFT - ER OF OUR HEADS  
 GOD OUR BE - GINN - ING AND OUR END

C- Ab Bb C- F- G-

YOU A - SIA PUTS ITS HOPE IN YOU GOD OF LOVE AND SOUND - LESS

Eb C- Ab G- 1. C- 2. C-

GRACE GOD WITH US OUR HI - DING PLACE FROM THE

**C BRIDGE**

Ab Eb Bb Ab Eb

A - LE - LU - IA SING - ING A - LE - LU -

Bb Ab Eb Bb/D C-

IA FOR THE LORD IS GOOD HIS LOVE EN - DURES AND HIS

Ab G- C-

PRO - MI - SES SE - CURE WE WILL

D.S. NO REPEAT  
 LAST X REPEAT BRIDGE

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# Taking Flight Despite the Odds: ATA Launches 7 new books

No one was left unscathed after a little over two years of restrictions, lockdowns, and the threat of an ever-evolving virus. Even the best of minds found themselves struggling to put to words their thoughts... and that has been true even of our writers. So, when the books came off the press- we had every reason to celebrate and rejoice!

And celebrate we did last September 26, during the opening night of the recently concluded General Assembly, because we launched, not one or two books, but SEVEN new books! Of the seven books, 3 were produced as part of the Asia Bible Commentary series and the rest were non- commentary books. How faithful God has been to enable our writers and editors to produce these books despite the challenging times! Despite all odds, the Lord allowed seven new books to be published- books that we hope will equip His people to carry out His mission.

Dr. Steve Pardue, Associate Publications Secretary, who also introduced the people that make up the Publications committee, presented each of ATA's newly published books and celebrated the people behind the books.

But more than just simply presenting the newly published books, Dr. Pardue further celebrated the release of each book by sharing to the audience the highlights of each book and what makes each of them a worthwhile read!

These are the seven books and how Dr. Pardue described each of them:

## From the Asia Bible Commentary Series:

- 1 & 2 Kings

Dr. Jesudason Baskar Jeyaraj

This book offers a unique contribution to our understanding of sin and frailty, God's character and redemption.

- Joel, Nahum, and Malachi

Joseph Too Shao and Rosa Ching Shao

The Shaos bring the wisdom of OT scholarship, clinical psychology, and the wealth of their



ATA launches 7 new books despite the odds!

experience. They help us here in Asia to hear the prophets with new ears.

- Psalms 73 – 150

Dr. Rico Villanueva

This is a much-awaited commentary that will allow us to better savor the Psalter as God's living word spoken thousands of years ago. But still speaking powerfully and healing us in the 21st century Asia.

## For the non- commentary books

ATA seeks to create resources that will enable every discipline to communicate the goodness of the gospel alongside the power and beauty of Asian cultures. These 4 new books were designed to be practical tools in the classroom.

- Missions in Southeast Asia Diversity and Unity in God's design

Sam Law and Kiem- Kiok Kwa

Designed to break new ground in missiology. We will learn new things that have not been said before and this is done by focusing on the context of Southeast Asia in a dazzling set of essays. [Through this book] you will gain a grasp of the history of missions in this region and learn what cutting edge missiologists are saying and reflecting on. [It's worth noting how,] one endorser put it like this: "This book leaves a beautiful tapestry, exploring how the unchanging message of the bible remains relevant in an endlessly evolving environment."

Dr. Pardue further mentioned that this book is important in carrying out the church's mission.

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*From page 10*

- Contextualization and the Old Testament Asian and Western Perspectives

Dr. Jerry Hwang

This is a really special book- with the word “contextualization” thrown around a lot, especially in many of our gatherings. Often times these discussions are vague and general, and they often only focus on the new testament. In this book, Dr. Hwang really presses us to make a major contribution to the contribution to the conversation from here in Asia. In 9 chapters, he challenges us to hear the OT in fresh ways and how the OT makes the Asian context come alive.

Dr. Pardue invited the audience to get one for themselves and maybe even for a friend so they can converse on it.

Before introducing the last two books, Dr. Pardue mentioned that they were part of the Foundation of Christian Thought series- and these books are:

- Asian Christian Ethics

Dr. Bernard Wong and Dr. Aldrin Penamora

[This book] Curates an incredible set of essays that covers a wide gamut of topics- from the big and heavy topics like caste and class- to the practical issues that Asian Christians face today like

corruption and bribery or what does it mean to honor our parents in the context of multi faith households.

Dr. Wong and Penamora have done an incredible service in bringing together a vision of human life formed by the gospel, expressed in faithful living in the Asian context. This is a landmark work that is something to be excited about!

- Exploring the Old Testament in Asia

Jerry Hwang and Angukali Rotokha (Dr. Mona Bias and Dr. Shirley Hope, who are contributors to this book, represented the work done in the book. )

The book is spoken rightly by one of its endorsers as a “tour de force” in 12 essays. The editors introduce the students to the unique ways the OT interacts with Asian Culture. Readers and learners will see the OT with new eyes. It will allow us to see how the OT speaks to our culture of honor, shame, patronage in ways one has never read before.

All the newly launched book were for sale on site during the General Assembly at a a discounted price.

If you were not able to attend or did attend but still want to get a copy of any of these books (or other ATA books for that matter), you may order through the website of Langham Publishing: <https://langhamliterature.org/>

HAPPY READING! ♦

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*From page 6 , A Theology of the Body for Digital Theological Education*

connecting the physical lived reality of local churches with theological institutions through the digital world?

For example, one of the challenges facing digital theological education is the question of how to do spiritual formation. One approach in online education has been to off-shore this to the churches. However, I think a richer, more networked model should involve a collaboration between seminaries, as the well-spring of scholarship, with the church, the locus of community.

The various ecclesiologies of our churches might at first make this seem daunting. However, if we can find solutions to this, it could have immense potential.

Churches, for the longest time have off-shored theological education to the seminaries. At times churches have complained that our graduates don't seem well trained for the church. Could such a collaboration, bridge the gap between the

academically rich seminary or bible college and contextually rich church?

As an analogy to the power of the body and physical presence over a digital one, I'd like us to reflect on our current spiritual reality. The new birth experience, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, the conviction of the spirit over sin, the grace and mercy in forgiveness. These are all realities that all of us have experienced and are more convinced of as the years go by. Yet this very real experience does not leave us satisfied.

We are awaiting our ultimate upgrade.

We are waiting to see him face-to-face.

I don't believe there is any believer who is not looking forward to their glorified body and seeing our Lord in his.

It's because bodies that matter.

Ours and His. ♦

*Thoughts from the Participants: Learnings and gleanings from  
“The Digital Turn in Theological Education:  
Impact, Challenges and Opportunities”*

**“Church-based training programs are using virtual means to train facilitators of local learning groups, and increasing numbers of local learning groups meet online. An opportunity and a challenge! The Assembly gave significant pointers for building community and growing disciples in the virtual space.”**

- Dr. Graham Aylett, General Secretary, Increase

- I learned the importance of working hard at keeping our learners at the center of our online learning; producing excellent presentations; [ and ] ensuring that spiritual formation is embedded within the theological curricula.

- [It became clear that] We are living in a digital world, like it or not. [The] Church cannot choose to ignore the situation and continue to do what we have been doing all [this time], we need to join and engage the different generations where they are [at]. In the Metaverse, it is a real person behind the Avatars- [a real person] that the Holy Spirit can touch and change. So, this GA confirms that we need to pay attention to these trends and take action through the new technology to reach people where the traditional church might not have access. But the big question remains "How", including skillsets and funding. How then can Theology educations help to prepare the the new generations of Pastor?

- [ The GA] added to my knowledge base of new technologies. [It] persuaded me that we can't go back (re technology) but must go forward. [It] alerted me to dangers and possibilities [with these] new technologies. [It] helped me develop theological and educational insights [with regards to] new technology in church and ministry training.

- [The GA] Provided various ways to move forward into digital world. Challenges and opportunities were laid out very clearly. [It not only helped us] think in the right direction as [leaders of] theological seminaries, [but also allowed us to know] who to ask for help from as we networked.

- I am a Westerner, not from Asia, though I am doing Theological education in India, China, Malaysia, Nepal and elsewhere. I had a couple meals with people during which time I heard ideas that were very practically helpful to me. These were encouraging times.

- It (the GA) made me aware of the recent trends in technology and how institutions may benefit from them.

- [The] online platform is a major way forward, there are so many facilities that are available for the ATA family- we can learn much from other colleges.

- [The] digital world is challenging, but a great opportunity to reach our neighbors who are already in that world.

- [I've learned that] we need to reimagine pedagogy for a digital age...How can faculty make learning collaborative and interactive?

- [I've learned that] technology is moving forward but can never adequately replace human contact.

- [The GA made me realize that] older generations of theological educators need to catch up with the digital turn. Digitization is here to stay.

- [The GA taught me that] 1.) incarnating in the digital space is necessary, 2) there are tools to help, 3) but we need to reflect on what makes [a] human human. [We need to] think of the outcome as we engage

- [The GA allowed me to see the] advances in digital technologies used among some theological

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educators. A wholesale embrace of all digitality comes at a cost: learning curve, loss of connection with 80% of the world who live in digital poverty, and (Prabhu Singh) reaching the **WHOLE** world that includes the digitally affluent/elites that have the resources, access, competencies, and platforms as well as the majority world that we assume have similar capacities.

- I learn from the GA that the digital community will be a new branch of members churches have to take care of. We need to take intentional steps to plan and reach out to them, and there is a high likelihood for them to remain online.

- [The GA made realize that we need to] 1.) help students/churches to differentiate [between] real and virtual, 2.) incarnation - ministry and mission to those "live in virtual" world, 3. [we] can't just simply use the same method and transport it online.

- The whole idea of the digital age and how to witness and disciple during this age was new to me and impacted me greatly.

- Pedagogy determines the use of technology.

- There is no going back to a pre-digital age of education. Use technology well but don't make it the center of everything.

- I quite like how the discussions have helped me personally to look beyond the question of legitimacy (the debate on should we go digital or not?) to how we respond to it (learning how to respond to the digital turn). I come from a context where generally online mode of learning is still a distant thought, but the GA has also helped me see if this is where the world is headed, it is time to move beyond my personal comfort and see how I may be best able to engage the current trend (to the best of means available in my own context). ♦



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