



Transcriptions

The Case for Theological Graduate Schools: Reform of Theological Education

Ted Ward

Annotation: *Staley Lectures: Reform of Theological Education, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA, 1979.* Ted Ward offers his perspective on the purpose of theological graduate schools. He argues for contextualization, warns about limitations of theological education, and at the end of the address he offers suggestions for the reform of theological education.



Quite honestly this morning what I will be addressing is what I think to be the trend within theological education and I'm not sure that I can argue that the database trend is all that different from my own hopes and aspirations for theological education in our time. And I may do a far less careful job, this morning, discriminating between my own biases and what the people in the Third World are saying. So that is a kind of confessional at the outset so that you might not hold altogether those in the Third World responsible for the harebrained schemes that may come out of the next half hour together.

First of all, terminology. The case for theological graduate schools in, at least, one sense: all of theological education in North America at the Master's level and above might be called "graduate" in the sense that the American higher education system tends to refer to anything beyond the Bachelors degree as "graduate" school. So the distinction I make here is not between graduate and undergraduate, but between two of the modes of theological education: that mode that is

primarily concerned with those who are in pastoral service ministries whether preparationally or operationally, and that third sector to the right of our chart [chart not available] that we did not talk about yesterday: the graduate education that is concerned less with enhancement of gifts *per se* than it is with prophecy that is more characteristically called “development of seminal scholarship” than it would be ministerial training or ministerial development where the emphasis is less on the skills and competencies of ministerial service than it is on literary productivity. So when I refer to theological graduate schools, I am referring to, at best, only part of what is done at a seminary such as Gordon Conwell today and much more with what is not being done at all in most theological education in the Third World, and what is done almost as a by-product, a sort of sociological accident, within such an institution as this. There may, indeed, be prophecy. There may, indeed, be seminal scholarship. There may, indeed, be literary productivity, but in all probability it is more because there is here a group of seminal scholars serving as faculty and with the little finger of the left hand they happen to write articles and books.

My vision for a theological graduate school suggests that not just the faculty but the students or, if you please, all participants in such an assembly would be characterized by literary productivity and would be concerned with the development of seminal scholarship within that society, culture, or nation and would, indeed, be keenly aware of their needs for the Holy Spirit in the gifts of prophecy. Thus, such a community would ideally be constituted as a community of contributing servants keenly aware that what they are doing is not *training* ministerial leadership, but *supporting* ministerial leadership with that literature which is absolutely essential for the development of a contextualized theology.

We must remember that, with this background, the Third World has a severe lack because it has been characteristically highly dependent on the literature of the West, the scholarship of the West, dealing with the issues of the West, and in many cases pulling leadership—seminal scholarship sorts of people out of culture and bringing them that they, too, might participate in the development of the literature of the West and then ultimately to translate things back into their own language for the folks back home. Rarely speaking directly to the issues back home, but giving the folks back home a chance to see second-hand what it is that the theologians in the West are concerned about. I submit that this has weakened the Third World church. Yes, God in his great providence has prospered the Third World church and we have to say, despite all the handicaps, the Holy Spirit of God is moving dramatically particularly in such regions as Latin America and Africa.

Now before we completely dismiss and leave that which we focused on yesterday which is the ministerial-focused portions of theological education—those who are called to service, including those who are actively engaged in service, let me make a few observations. First of all, I think I see a trend and I would not be resisting a trend myself to see this first facet of theological education undergoing a kind of shrinkage. I think that this is kind of inevitable as the middle facet grows. For example, Theological Education by Extension has primarily focused in the middle sector [he is using a chart that is not available] and the result has been that more pastors who have not had education are coming in as functional pastors to theological education than are coming in through pre-service preparational programs. I think that it is quite possible that, in time, this sector may shrink. Now most of the North American institutions of theological education are primarily geared to this particular mode. So to say that this function may shrink is, in one sense, to virtually threaten the existence of such an institution as yours; unless that institution does aggressively what a number of institutions are doing and some people within your institution are doing, and that is reconceptualize your role within this middle sector in response to the realities of the demands of people in the field.

Now let me give you a few illustrations of what I mean because we are not without exemplary programs within the United States and I'll give you three within the United States: First of all, SCUPE (Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education) in the city of Chicago in which a number of seminaries have formed a consortium; seminaries including Calvin Theological Seminary—very significant Christian Reformed seminary of the Midwest; happens to be in the illustrious state of Michigan. North Park Theological Seminary, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School—a place that some of you may have heard of—and several others, as well, that you may not have heard of: Acadia Divinity College being an example. These seminaries together have formed what is an urban consortium for a sort of middle- or third-year theological experience; something as an extension of the sort of program that you have as an option in Boston for your middle year.

Let me read you a few things that they say about this program and I think you will hear strange echoes of the material that I have been giving you from the Third World.

The educational process of SCUPE is designed with a balance between the traditional and non-traditional learning methods. A student expecting a traditional seminary classroom-type experience would be disappointed and a student wishing to be totally free of the teacher/student relationship would also be disappointed. The SCUPE program is a combination of both reflective and directive learning experiences. Reflection set in a historical and social context is carried on in the midst of the student's struggle to understand what he is, and what he is to be instrumentally in God's creative process.

SCUPE understands the importance of providing skills and tools which will enable a student to see more clearly personal and social reality: to know that he has the means within his grasp to make a significant difference in this reality. The SCUPE program is designed to prepare seminarians for ministry in the context of the city. The program is an intensive 11-month experience for second- and third-year seminary students.

And I think they mean second- *or* third-year as I've studied the program. "The student lives in the city and participates in both the academic studies and practical internship experiences in an urban church. Additionally, much learning comes through regular small-group interaction sessions. Students receive a full year of academic credit for the year with SCUPE."

The Southern Baptists have a program that I will describe to you second; and you will notice, by the way, that the SCUPE program (before I leave that) is really a pre-service preparational program but moving in the direction of an in-service sort of program, even as your middle year in Boston does. I'm sure these ideas are not altogether new to the people who are very alert and thinking in this institution, and I do not suggest that this institution is *ipso facto* behind. I am simply pointing out that some of the things that you have going, other places are also moving on; and some of the things that are happening are rather large-scale and rather dramatic. Take, for example, the emphasis of the seminary extension program of the Southern Baptist Convention. You may be aware that the Southern Baptist Convention is somewhat larger than the Associate Reform Presbyterian Church; somewhat smaller than the United States Army, but nevertheless a force to be reckoned with on Saturdays and Sundays. There is a catalogue every year produced by the seminary extension operation of the Southern Baptist Church representing the combined theological extension operations of six theological seminaries: Louisville, Wake Forest, Fort Worth, Kansas City, New Orleans, and Mill Valley, California. In other words, the whole of the Southern Baptist

Convention seminary system is allied in a consortium to provide extension services and they have three separate curricula rather well orchestrated.

Seminary extension learning resources are organized into three curriculum series. First series is called “The Basic Curriculum” series. It includes courses planned and developed specifically for pastors—not pre-pastors, notice—for pastors who perhaps because of their circumstances beyond their control were unable to complete elementary or high school work. In other words, their first concern in this program is for pastors who are functional pastors who need theological education in order to do a more effective job. Does that sound familiar? Now you say, “Well, we don’t have any churches in New England like that.” Well, New England isn’t the whole world, don’t forget. And, by the way, I think I can show you some New England churches that do have that particular problem, but I wouldn’t want to mention them. And, by the way, there are sixteen identifiable courses in that particular program.

The second program or series is “The College-Level Curriculum” series. They call it study opportunities for pastors without seminary training. In other words, college graduate-educated persons but without seminary or without thorough seminary complete degree programs; excellent refresher courses, as well, for seminary graduates also valuable for Christian laypersons: men and women seeking study opportunities on a high academic level within the churches. And there are forty courses in that program.

The third series is called “The Professional Career Development” series planned especially for the seminary graduate as a life-long learning program of in-service development. And it is less organized around courses than it is on self-created learning experiences with advisement and assistance from the operating center programs. There are, around the country, I believe there are forty extension centers around the United States—north and south, east and west—where resources of this sort are brought to bear, and where people can come for periodic seminars as they are doing their study work, largely in an independent autonomous mode, coming together in periodic seminars exactly like we recommended ten years ago in the extension seminary movement. The most clear-cut example of theological education by extension that I know of in North America is in the hands of the Southern Baptist Convention.

They say this: “Competency in ministry requires continuing education. No longer can it be assumed that an academic degree earned several years ago equips one completely to meet responsibilities of Christian ministry today. The seminary extension program believes that the seminary graduate has the responsibility for taking major initiative in designing his own continuing education program.” And, by the way, if an institution is not tuned to that particular theme today, I would regard it as somewhat out-of-date.

A third program, and I switch now from the huge size of the Southern Baptist Convention, to a rather large but individual church. I take you to the peninsula just below San Francisco, in the outskirts of San Francisco, to the Peninsula Covenant Church, Redwood City, California. And I wish to read to you from a document of resolution passed this previous June 1979 in that church and I will let the document speak for itself because I find it to be very exciting. “Article One: Peninsula Covenant Church will participate in Practice-based Education for Ministry.” Those are all capital words; it’s their term: Practice-based Education for Ministry. Now notice where the initiative here is: the initiative is in a church, not in a seminary. The initiative is in a church and everything you hear from here on, remember, is initiated at the level of that local church; a fairly large one, a fairly

powerful one, and not exactly an impoverished one. “A training church,” (Article point one) “like a training hospital,” (notice the simile) “a training church, like a training hospital, where young residents in ministry take both extension courses and engage in practice ministry during this period of one to four years.” The advantages to the church are the following:

- a) The opportunity to shape the ministry of that church.
- b) Explore a creative alternative to current models of ministry.
- c) Help train both laity and future vocational ministers for its own leadership, or for the leadership of other churches.
- d) Develop a pool from which to draw future senior staff members.
- e) Expand staff services in growing areas at the lowest possible cost with the highest possible quality in personnel.

Major point three: “Young people would be recruited for authorized positions. They would then go to school approximately half-time and serve in the church on staff the balance of their time. Currently, they could receive an accredited degree from the extension program of Fuller. Currently available is the M.A. in Theology and under negotiation is the M.Div. in Theology.” Notice the initiative is from a church saying to Fuller, we see your extension program as appropriately fitting in to what we, in our church, are developing. We want you to serve us in this way. Major point four: “These persons, then, could be assigned to supervision by staff members of the church on a permanent or rotating basis. The advantages to the resident would be as follows:

- The opportunity to learn ministry while practicing it. (Does that sound familiar?) Many recent authorities think that this would be more satisfactory as a model for all of theological education.
- The capacity to earn a small wage so that one does not have to go to school, engage full-time in a secular job, and practical work in the church all at the same time. (Does that sound interesting?) Applause.
- The creating of a good employment record during the course of the academic work which will enhance the future employment and placement of a person.
- The providing of an opportunity to test one’s skills and gifts in ministry before completion of costly education. The student would be paid approximately \$500 per month which would be covered under the general personnel budget of the church.
- The system could work well with two currently funded positions already existing and a third to come: The Church Athletic Director (you’re in New England,) the Junior High Youth Director, and possibly the Senior High College Assistant. Close to 350 young people are involved in this particular program. Additionally, there will need to be, in the next few years, leadership in the areas of college work, singles ministry, children’s ministry, pastoral care, and visitation evangelism.

Affirmed June 12, 1979, Peninsula Covenant Church, Redwood City, California.

Pipe dreams, theory, speculation? Think twice. There is, today, an emphasis on pastoral development in theological seminaries. We see it in programs such as this. We see it in the Third World, but all of that leaves unanswered the need for high-level scholarship within the church. In the Third World—and if I hear the Southern Baptists right—even here realistic educators assume that pastoral development programs will be the source of significant new literature. I don’t believe it.

We have learned from TEE that one of the major complaints is that Theological Education by Education or—if you please, moving to a great emphasis in this mode—has the effect of reducing education’s prestige or, in the complaints of some, producing an inferior education. As an educator, I’m not very convinced by that argument and I track it to several diseases: first, the disease of the clamor for degrees, basically, a secular recognition problem. I’m empathetic with it, but I’m not sympathetic with it. I can understand the motives and where it’s coming from and how the secular society conditions us that way, but I’m not, as a Christian, very enthusiastic about that clamoring. But it’s stronger in the Third World than it is in the United States, and anytime somebody starts talking about an experiential learning program somebody else says, “Oh, that sounds like a cheap degree.”

Elitism and status anxiety I find to be yet another of the sources: this notion of eroding the quality of the degree and we certainly wouldn’t want to let that happen here because, after all, we have our status and we have our elitism and we want to preserve it at all costs. It may be a little snide, but if we look closely inside the depths of our institutional heart, we find a shred of that here and there.

Third of the sources is tradition, itself. This is the language you hear sometimes, “Even if it’s better for the church, it’s not the way I was educated.” And, of course, that’s supposed to say something about the status quo.

The second complaint we hear is that Theological Education by Extension, or this emphasis on the middle track, makes the church too dependent on new and foreign technology and, indeed, in the Third World it has. I didn’t see this argument at first. In fact, I thought that it was just one more spurious argument, but I believe it now. Because generally what has happened is that this middle track does call upon a much more detailed kind of instructional planning and a much more careful and precise development of instructional materials. And when the resources aren’t available to do that in culture, what do you suppose happens? People import them. And many responsible church leaders in the Third World have begun to be very negative about Theological Education by Extension because it has forced an even greater dependency on outside resources. Some of us, in supporting the movement at the beginning, felt that it should be an indigenous movement and should get its resources from inside and should be the equation for the nationalization of educational institutions. It hasn’t worked that way and I’ve already described, in an earlier lecture, the role of mission boards in seeing that it didn’t work that way. Particularly the matter of Programmed Instruction with which my name has been attached partly because I tried to help in terms of giving people some technological advice and counsel, and even wrote some materials to help people learn to do Programmed Instruction. And materials were all designed for Third World persons, but they’ve been used more extensively by North American missionaries. And exclusion of national persons in such writing is almost the rule.

Third, the potential limiting of theological education within a country to service-oriented levels of scholarship to the exclusion of seminal scholarship and literary production. This is to, I believe, to be the most potent and one I want to speak to this morning. There is very definitely a potentiality in all of this trend that we become so service-oriented and so committed to first-level training and so committed to in-service development of pastors—valuable though that is—above all else, there must be somewhere in the establishment a source mechanism from which comes that literature that enriches the church in its theological profundity.

Now I don't mean elitism, and I want to talk to that in a moment, because there is a danger that the minute we start drawing any kind of a line in here that all of us say, "Yes, and I want to be on that side of the line." What I'm talking about, over here on this side of the line, would probably be less than 1 in 100 people and would consist of absolutely no one under the age of about 28 to 35, and would—I will suggest some other criteria later on—I'm getting ahead of my story.

Clearly, we need advance research skills and study opportunities for those who can become seminal leaders in the Third World and, indeed, in our own churches. I guess we'll have to call it a Graduate School of Theology, but I'm not very happy with that term partly because of what I know about human nature. And let me identify six elements of human nature that worry me the minute you start talking about a Graduate School of Theology.

First of all, basic human pride: a flaw that kind of runs deep in the human nature. Second, elitism: that tendency to draw social class lines and privilege lines along some kind of assumed merit. Third, pomposity. Christian leaders and preachers with academic degrees are prone to this particular human trait. Writing only for other scholars—a general problem of scholarship itself. It's a nasty habit among scholars to write for other scholars and to make sure their stuff looks good so that they won't be criticized by their colleagues. That does help the quality, but quite often it reduces the relevancy. And, of course, the last one is ivory tower irrelevancy, itself. And quite often a whole big operation of graduate development can become irrelevant because it loses sensitivity to the needs of people. Bishop Newbigin has said,

Seminary training tends to create a professional elite separated from the ordinary membership. A theological seminary is often a sort of Sandhurst (read West Point) where an officer class is trained, thus, creating a chasm between clergy and the other ranks. The style of training in the church ought to be more akin to that of a citizen army; something which is available to all which continues all through life as members grow in capacity to profit from such training and to exercise wide leadership. The standard type of seminary training aligns the leadership of the church with the privileged elements in society instead of with the poor and the marginal; thus, it serves to perpetuate an improper alliance between the churches and the ruling classes in society.

And the minute I start talking about a theological graduate school, I see that sector rearing large. These problems, in large part, relate to the tendency of graduate scholarship and graduate research value to dominate the functional service value in any institution that is primarily power-oriented. Sometimes in a service-oriented institution, you get the vice versa, you get the reverse where the service motif tends to dominate the scholarly motif and sometimes scholarship is stymied. It's very hard to keep these two in balance. That's why I suggest two separate kinds of institutions. And I suggest to Gordon Conwell, as elsewhere, the drawing of a nice neat line and the creating of two establishments. We did that long ago with reference to the Christian liberal arts college and the theological seminary which, at one point, were a combined institution. I think we are very well in the position now of needing, at least, three kinds of institutions. Jonathan Chow puts it this way:

A critical and historical analysis of the traditional missionary model of ministry exported from the West shows that it's built on an administrative structure reflecting Roman and Greek mentality rather than on a functional structure of service as found in the New Testament. The administrative structure depends upon the creation of an elitist group of professional clergy whose authority is invested in administrative status. This is especially obvious in the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, and Methodist systems. As a power structure

of imperial magnitude, it basically reflects the secular model. Higher ecclesiastical bureaucrats, armed with the authority of promotion and ordination, control the lower clergies. Lower clergies, in turn, armed with sacraments and the rights of interpreting the Word, subjugate, if not exploit, the laity. In the mission fields, Western missionaries usually enjoy these positions of authority over the native helpers and exploit them, at least financially, as their subordinate. Many of the mission executives in the West who hold the final word of decision in ideology and administration are not immune from practice of exploitation. The example has been set in mission enterprise and the danger of head-trips and elitism will continue to lurk.

This is why I fear theological graduate schools, here or in the Third World, though I recognize their absolute necessity.

Vernon Grounds said, within a year and within a few miles of where we stand,

Unless I am mistaken, this is the very dynamic which likewise operates in much of Christian service: the sinful desire to be noticeably superior. First, if possible, number one; never number two. I am honestly afraid that American evangelicalism is guilty of idolatry. It is bowing down—if I might borrow a biting phrase from the philosopher, William James—bowing down before the bitch goddess of success. As disciples of Jesus Christ, too many of us are sinfully concerned about size: the size of sanctuaries, the size of salaries, the size of Sunday schools. Too many of us are sinfully preoccupied with statistics about budgets and buildings and buses and baptism. Our colleges and seminaries are unwittingly inoculating students with the virus of worldly success. The pride of life is nothing other than a selfish desire to be noticeably superior even if our superiority is nothing more than a conspicuous humility.

We must be on guard, I point to the recent issue of *Christianity Today* on Christian education where an article by a chairman of humanities at a Christian college in Kansas which is known for its sterling qualities—but in this moment will go nameless—an article is written calling for a yardstick of excellence. And I tell you that that whole article speaks to excellence in terms such as these: “Just as the Christian liberal arts colleges decided to join the secular and private institutions in seeking regional accreditation; they should also join these colleges in seeking to establish chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.” The whole article is about why we need Phi Beta Kappa in Christian liberal arts colleges and not one word about excellence in Christian perspective. The blight is upon us. A Christian graduate school is inherently dangerous, but absolutely necessary. We have to take the chance.

The further development of the church in many places depends on contextualized theological materials. Gottfried Osei-Mensah, the African who is Executive Secretary of the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization, says this:

Where the messengers of the Gospel have failed to show adequate respect for the customs of those to whom they have gone, or made no effort to identify with them in their way of life, the Gospel has achieved only superficial penetration of the people and their culture and the results have been far from satisfactory. The new believer's faith in Christ has remained stunted, weak, lacking in assurance. One of the key ways that this needed cultural sensitivity is shown is through the local indigenization of literature and if we keep saying, ‘They're not ready yet,’ they never will be ready.

Bong Ro, Executive Secretary of Asia Theological Association identifies six issues in theological education:

Lack of students, lack of trained teachers, problems with contextualization, the brain-drain problem, lay training and the tremendous need in the Asian church for lay training, (and number six, listen) research centers. There is a perennial lack of suitable theological training material for schools and churches. We must create research centers where Asians can come, spend time in reflection and study, and produce textbooks and materials that deal with Asian issues and questions, Asian religions, missions, church growth, communication, etc.

Aha! Jonathan Chow again:

The Third World theological education establishment should be conducted within the context of the church and the local culture. This means that we should emphasize not only doctrinal aspects of the ministry, but the practical; not only Biblical context, but the cultural context; not only selective adaption from the West, but selective adaption from the living situation in culture. We should not swallow everything that is developed in the West such as the church growth fad. Third World theological educators must help their churches free themselves from continuous dependence on the West for ideas and forms of ministry. This means shaking the foundations and a collapse of existing structures and it's going to cost us a great deal.

Another Chinese, this one working in Geneva in the World Council of Churches, Choan-Seng Song says, "No theology is immune from cultural and historical influences. Theology is not culturally and historically neutral. A neutral theology is, in fact, a homeless theology. It does not belong anywhere. But theology really begins in earnest when it identifies its home in culture and discovers its belongingness. "Theology in Asia" he says, "has been a homeless theology because we've disowned our own home.

Now, our theology in the United States arises from the Bible speaking to our context and we should not disown that. But even so, we should expect the ministry of the Holy Spirit to develop theology in other cultures that has vitality for those cultures and, thus, we need—whether it is dangerous or not—to take seriously the notion of graduate schools of theology in the Third World.

Parenthetically: The kind of community of scholarship that I'm talking about might be even advantageous in our society so that within communities of scholarship certain issues can be debated carefully and analyzed critically before they are dumped out on the print market to the consternation and confusion of the church in North America. North American scholarship is, in some parts, irresponsible scholarship because it does not come from communities of scholars; it comes from hotheaded individuals. I'm not going to name names, but some of you know the current debate. Airing these sorts of things out into an unsuspecting public starving for help is not the way to develop strength in the church of Jesus Christ. We need communities of scholars who are correcting each other in a mutually accountable sense of Christian responsibility. That parenthesis is free.

I think it's imperative to encourage Christians, in many parts of the world, to develop graduate schools. Perhaps it might be better to call them "graduate research centers." Such institutions or organizations would have three major purposes:

First, to affirm and stimulate in-country scholarship. Secondly, to develop and produce literature for the enhancement of theological education and, in turn, for the whole people of God; clergy and laity alike. And third, to constitute and exercise a channel of disciplined prophecy. I believe, myself, this to be what the school of the prophets, in at least one period in the Old Testament, was all about: a mutually disciplining community of people through whom God was able to speak, not as if giving new special revelation, in our case in our time, but giving that sort of prophecy, “Thus saith the Lord” to our times in a cultural context.

The form of such an institution would be this: a community of producing scholarship, a beehive with no drones, a peer community of sharers, mutual prodders, mutual evaluators, and encouragers, and providing an access to decent library resources so that our scholarship could be something more than re-warming the old stuff.

Criteria for faculty: service, service, service. A pastoral experience or at least ministerial service experience without which such a person has no place on a faculty of this sort. Service, in terms of being already a contributor of, at least, a substantial book or books for the church. And, by the way, that’s not too steep a criterion even in the Third World. Third, service in terms of demonstrated competency as a mentor of other disciples.

And then, fourth, I would put in all the criteria of 1 Timothy 3 applied rigorously; the criteria for the elder applied rigorously especially concerning such things as gentleness, uncontentious, and not conceited. What would be the criteria for students in such a place? And you may notice that it doesn’t have much to do with grade point averages.

Service, in terms of competency in ministry; demonstrated competency in ministry. Demonstrated theological understanding. And third, demonstrated commitment to writing. Not the person on the personal head-trip, but the person who wants to get things brought down to ground so that God’s people can be edified. In short, I would put the publish or perish notion into high gear. The churches in the Third World can afford nothing less.

I Thessalonians 5: 12-25

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will bring it to pass. Brethren, pray for us. . . .

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.