



On the Training of Christian Ministers

He stands in his white collar and tie before his fellow tribesmen. He has been to Bible College and his people are proud of him. On this first Sunday he initiates his people into the mysteries of the Millennium. The congregation of herdsmen are blissfully befuddled by the sermon of the day but they nod and smile as they begin their post-benediction return to their huts to face another week of struggling for food, dreaming of the future, guiding families, facing temptation and puzzling over exactly how the Lord Jesus Christ relates to their dust-covered existence.

On that same Sunday in the town to the north an aging pastor finishes delivering his sermon on tithing to his coughing congregation. This TEE-trained veteran of the ministry has refined his approach through constant practise. His sermons on giving are well known, coming as they do at least once a month. The businessmen, university students, school teachers and civil servants in the congregation who shift in their seats sometimes let their minds wander during the message to ponder other questions. What does the Bible say about family life, what does the book of Romans teach, what does Ephesians say about the church or Genesis about science and Scripture? Good questions perhaps but not within the area of interest or expertise of the shepherd of this particular flock. He remembers having been tested on various programmed texts on some of these topics, somewhere, but most of these books are gathering dust and the white-ants got the rest.

The apparently awkward fit between these two pastors and their congregations raises the crucial and much-debated question of how best to train effective servants for the church of Jesus Christ. On the one hand many questions are being raised whether our residential Bible colleges, seminaries and institutes are producing the kind of church leadership we need. Do not such schools promote an elitist mentality? Do they not produce people who lose touch with the people, who subtly absorb the idea that education breeds superiority and buys one the right to expect and demand higher status, privilege and pay?

Do they not come from schools brainwashed with the idea that Theology refers to a set of notes neatly arranged under unpronounceable topics with “-ology” tacked onto the end? Do they not suspect that it is beneath theology to address such questions as how to be reconciled with my rebellious son, or how to fight angry feelings against God when the

rains don't come? Do not the newly formed accreditation movements simply reinforce the elitism, irrelevance and status-seeking so ingrained in institutional ministerial training? These searching questions are being asked by missiologists, educators, church leaders and thinking christian laymen around the world. The conclusion of their thinking seems to be that we need to reform our residential programs and promote more nonformal means of ministerial training through such things as extension education and occasional weekend seminars.

But new questions must be raised. Do not these new methods, aimed at eliminating the spiritual and cultural awkwardness of residential theological training, produce an awkwardness of their own? Were not the pioneers and architects of the new ideas products themselves of residential theological education? Does this not imply that institutions can provide creative and valuable sanctuaries for sustained biblical thinking and study? Cannot such sustained thinking produce agents of renewal and reform? Is it not also true that in an upwardly mobile culture such as one finds in many developing countries appropriate training for ministers in urban and town contexts may be better provided by residential than non-residential programs? Is not one way of coming alongside one's flock to be trained in a way that people in the congregation respect and understand? Does the laymen with a Ph.D. really want his minister to spurn the degree granting institutions and instead equip himself with a few seminars and certificates? Is it not also true that many residential programs are working productively with the new ideas and providing non-formal types of training as well?

These are but a few of the questions in the debate over theological education. This issue of EAJET contains two articles dealing with appropriate theological education. The reflections on Maasai leadership development and the pros and cons of accreditation, respectively, represent the continuing struggle to understand what kind of ministerial training the church needs.

Perhaps the best tentative stand to take at this point in the ongoing debate is to call for less ideology and more pragmatism. All sides seem willing to agree that the basic principle of theological education is to train twice-born people to practise in their unique cultural contexts the will of the living God who speaks in the Scripture. Whatever methods, institutions, or models make that happen, should be promoted and used. There's a place for both the educated greenhorn and the rusty veteran in the church of Christ. There's also a place for the institutional classroom as well as the programmed text. Lets keep chipping away at the rough edges of theological education till we produce ministers that are fit — both for their peoples needs and the Master's use.

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No question is more crucial to man than the oft asked — “What must I do to be Saved?” This issue of EAJET continues to explore the christian doctrine of salvation and issues concerning it that have been raised within the African context. Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo completes his two-part series on salvation by responding to a number of contemporary objections. In the final article, the question whether there is salvation outside of personal faith in Jesus Christ is explored. You’ll need to answer queries like these as a disciple of Jesus Christ. These articles just might help you in providing some biblical answers to these tough questions.