

“Theological Education and the Church: Current Challenges”
Tite Tienou, *Ward Consultation* Chicago 2004

Guiding Convictions.

Theological education makes sense only when it serves the church. Two serious considerations for the future of theological education are 1) the ecclesial vocation of theological education; and 2) the need to keep ecclesiology and missiology together.¹

Questions

1. What is our mental picture of today’s *ecclesia*?
2. How do we envision *theological education*? If we had different criteria, what would theological education look like?

Ecclesia in God’s World Today

1. World demographics give a picture of Christianity that is surprising to many Westerners. (See Duane Elmer’s information on world statistics under Papers)
2. Ecclesial demographics must also be considered. What is the typical church today? The typical image of the world church is not a North American church. (See Pierson, Paul. 2003. *The New Context of Christian Mission: Challenges and Opportunities for the Asian Church*. In Wonsuk and Julie C. Ma (eds). *Asian Church and God’s Mission*. West Caldwell, NJ: OMF Literature, Inc.)

Clearly, evangelicals are not who we think we are; nor are we where we think we are.

Questions

What are the ecclesial and theological education implications of this specific reality: the typical Anglican in today’s world is a *Nigerian woman*?

Theology

1. What is the focus: Theology as words about God? Or Theology as enterprise for the facilitation of knowing God and loving Him and our neighbor fully? (cf. Mark 12:30-31)

(Note: Knowing God requires what C. John Weborg calls *theologia prima* (*Ex Auditu*, 2001:61-62). Evagrius Ponticus, 345-399: “If you pray truly, you are a theologian; if you are a theologian you pray truly”; Karl Barth: “The first and basic act of theological work is prayer (...) without prayer there can be no theological work.” *Evangelical Theology*, 1963, p. 141).

¹ Note: In this regard, see Andrew Kirk’s paper “Reenvisioning the Theological Curriculum as if the *Missio Dei* Mattered” in *Current Consultations*, Czech Republic (LC).

2. We must address specific evangelical discomforts: a) the temptation to elevate certain times and places above others; b) the temptation to be too closely wedded to ratio as discursive reasoning.

(Note: Leopold Sedar Senghor: la th^vologie chr^vtienne a^vt plus marqu^ve par la *ratio* discursive que par la *ration* intuitive. Theological education must, of necessity, include *theologia prima* and *theological secunda* (Weborg, 2001).

The 2/3 world tends to gravitate to *theologia prima*; the West tends to gravitate to *theological secunda*.)

Theological Education

1. What should be our criteria for evaluating Christian theology and theological education? (“The global domination of western theology remains largely unaddressed. Theological education in the non-Western world is still captive to the Western tradition and curriculum.” P. 98. “A new criterion of theological validity ought to be adopted. *Only theology that motivates and sustains the church in witness and service in the world deserves to be accredited*”, p. 105. Italics in the original. International Bulletin for Missionary Research, Vol. 25, No. 3, July 2001).
2. Are we prepared to deal with the implications of our conversation? Do we really want to make orality and intuitive reasoning significant building blocks of the fabric of our theology and theological education?

The term oral literate needs to replace the term non-literate or illiterate. .

Technology is making America oral in their mind set. In the past we narrowed the living, transforming Word of God to writ. A respect for the oral and intuitive broadens our understanding of the Word from simply written to something more holistic.