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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR REFORMATION OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

The main concern of this publication is to x-ray how Theological Education can serve as a tool for reformation of Church and society. The publication will show Theological Education as an agent of transformation of the Church and the society we belong.

Here, this publication will go into the definitions of the Church and society, even reformation will also be definite. The researcher will not only look into what is theology he will also look at theology and Education together.

The focus of this paper will be on the fundamental dimension on the role played by the Theological Education in the formation, reformation and transformation of the Church and society in the 21st Century. The paper will also look at the impact of Theological Education on our society and Churches of the universal Church. There shall be suggestions on the theological tools to be used when going about this paper.

However, when theological Education is on course there are some human resources to be used, it shall be examined. The researcher will try to explain more on the resource persons and material. The important of Theology to the Christian society will be looked into by the researcher. How the task of Theological Education is to be handle will also be discoursed. From this publication the researcher will want to deal with Theological challenges when studying Theological Education. Theological Education as a tool for reformation of Church and Society: Church of Nigeria Anglican Communion is in focus.

Keywords: Society; Education; Church.

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to let people understand that theological education can stand a place as a tool for the reformation and transformation of our todays Church and Society. The overall subject of paper is sound education formation of theological transformation of the society and Church. The case of theological education being use as a tool is the formation of character and attitudinal impasse of the people and the Church is a task that must be done. It is the history

of society; it has been said that the best is to educate their people to produced good services to respond in a good manner to their world. To do all this through theological education, people need to understand more of the society effectively.

This paper tries to examine the veracity of the Church and society exploit of theological education in the changing of the society. The essential point to start this discussion is by knowing first clarity is theological education so that it will give clarity and meaning to the study we are going through. Also, the essence of this approach lies in the fact that it does not only give clear-cut picture of what is intended to be passed across in the paper to be presented. Some terms also needs to be some of the term used in this paper. The issue of theological education couple with reformation of Churches and society's transformation to the would-be priests or missionaries should be carefully dealt with.

2. Terms Used

Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) due to the fact that there are lots of denominational Churches in Nigeria within Christendom we need to differentiate between the Churches. Because of this, the paper is written the point of view of Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

In 24th February 1979 the Church of Nigeria became an autonomous province with full powers over its affairs and future within the whole Anglican Communion. This Church compose of numerous ethnic groups, language and cultural background. The Church is having about 186 Bishops with their own Dioceses. The number keeps growing in number Theology.

Theology may be defined as the study which through participation as and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available.¹ Theology is that branch of philosophy which concern is on the study of the Science of God.² It is a word derived from the Greek words: “theo” and “logos”, it means an account of the study about God studies about gods were categorized as mythical theology by store writers, but on their own regarded stories as natural or rational theology. In view of the fact that they are closer to Aristotle's theological philosophy, but today are classed as philosophical theology or metaphysics.³

3. Education

Education is the eternal process of superior adjustment of the physical and mentally developed, free, conscious, human being to God, as mainfasted in the intellectual, emotional and volitional environment of man.⁴It is also an activity which aim at practical results in contrast with activities which aim at practical results in contrast with activities which aim at theoretical results.⁵ Education is an elastic which is capable of several definitions. Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary defines it as the Systematic training and instruction of people.⁶ Which embodies training process in acquiring knowledge and ability.⁷ Education has been observed as a means of social continuity of life for shaping behaviours in a way to affecting life socially by imparting tradition and culture.⁸

Education is equivalent to “experience”, the experience of a living organism interacting with its normal environment. It a training which is given by suitable habits to the first instructs of virtue in

children, when pleasure and pain are rightly unplanted in non-rational souls. The particular training in respect of pleasure and pain, which leads to hate and love what you ought to hate or love, is called education. Plato observed in philosophy of education a phenomenon that converts the soul to the good of the society, so that the citizen lives a good life that is of benefit to the state. In view of modern development in education beyond the ancient legacy, several factors come into play, in view of this many competing interests are brought to bear on education, primary among which development is the rise of the university⁹ as the central institution for transmitting knowledge, based upon platonic ideology that knowledge would definitely effect a conversion that would enhance behavior in educational term. Education is also defined as the acquisition of the arts of utilization of knowledge and reconstruction of experience.¹⁰ Rev. Fr. Victor Ifeanyi defines education as the training and institutions which enlightens the mind, increase knowledge, foster insight, develop abilities and attitudes and enlighten the will.¹¹

4. Theological Education

According to Aladekugbe, theological Education can be said to be the leading of human sounds into the best perception of the word of God and make what is best out of it, he also want further by saying that it is the organization and construction of understanding though and idea of God and about God with the view to bringing into the most possible reality the existence and supremacy of the invisible being.¹² Igbari in his assertion said that theology is the study of the word of God, which task involves its origin, its content and its interpretation, for the purpose of discovering and knowing more about God the creator of heaven and earth.¹³ In an attempt to defend the integrity of God, Oboingi observed man's incapability of making God an object of our reflection, knowledge research and speech in the sense in which natural sciences understand the words, by putting forward hypotheses, through which they devise experiments, measuring and calculating,¹⁴ this however does not prelude the fact that believers seek to understand God more through various medium that is available to them. In view of this Karl Barth ranked theology as sciences because theology seems to signify a special science, who task is to apprehend, understand and speak of God. Rowan William see theology as a phenomenon to be studied and capable of changing every man. According to him theology begins when something in the human world and human lives has struck at such depth that we need language more than just the convertiuoinal language of human agency and historical forces,¹⁵ in essence, theology arises when the world looks new. The impulse to do theology arises when the world looks different from what we thought it was.

Theological Education is the enlightenment of the souls and minds of individuals about God and his activities. It is a process, which leads out men from the bondage of ignorance to knowledge, from the cage of "I don't know, to the reality of facts about God, from the realm of the darkened mind to the glorious enlightenment of the word of God. From dulaimSwam's definition of theology we can say that theological adulation is teaching of sounds to the best of God's word and teachings and making what is best out of them.

Without doubt theological education teaches people practical skill for their work in the Church and society.

5. The Church

The word Church and cognate terms in other language (e.g. kirche) are derived from the Greek word (κῆνος) “belonging to the Lord.” They are, however, to be understood in light of the New Testament Greek term ἐκκῆσια (ekklesia). While this is a common word. Its occurrences are unevenly distributed through the New Testament. ¹⁶ The Church is one of the few visible forms of a corporate relationship among believers. The Bible employs a number of images to describe the Church. Among the more important are the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ The collective dimension of the Christian life is also what we call church. The Christian Church is that collection of human societies which is inspired by, and seeks to represent the significance of Jesus Christ. Hence Paul’s description of it as a body of Christ (e.g. Eph. 1:22-23). Because Jesus was deemed by early Christians to be the epitome of Israel, the Church is described in New as “the people of God” (e.g. 1 Peter 2:10). ¹⁸ Further, since it was believe to be the people among whom God is present to an unprecedented and decisive degree, the Church differed to as the temple the temple of God’s spirit (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 15). When attention is focused upon the sanctifying effects of the spirit, it is spoken of as the new, re-created and new regenerated humanity (e.g. Rom. 5:6; 1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 6:16).¹⁹

6. Reformation of Church and Society

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary reformation is the act of improving or changing of something. When talking about the matter of the Church we can define reformation as the law ideas in religion as 16th Century Europe that led to reform the Roman Catholic Church and to the forming of the protestant Churches; the period of time when these changes were taking place is the time we call reformation time. The Reformation of the Church and society here is the time when new thing new ideas, discipline in the Church and society were responding to change.

7. Society

This is the people in general, living together in a community. It could be defined as a particular and any other thing that we can come together in sharing. Society could also mean a group of people who join together for a particular purpose. Giving meaning to society we can explain it further by saying it is a group of people in a country who are fashionable, rich and powerful. It is also the state of being with other people.

8. The Importance of Theological Education to the Church and Society

To have a very useful Church and Society reform the Theological Education of it must be put in order, that is the more reason why comprehensive arrest of the discipline must be taking into consideration. To this instance some of the Theological Educational studies must be put in place, like the study of Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Experimental Theology, Historical Theology and Feminist Theology, ²⁰ though there are many theological disciplines in the field of theological studies, Gboingi made a theological clarification on the importance of each subject. In his presentation, we are suppeel with the necessity of appreciating the richness of the field of theology in general, we have these important theological necessity which are known as the Academics which encompass the liberal or classical studies of the Bible.

It also comprises field such as the Old Testament and New Testament literature systematic theology, dogmatic theology, historical theology, philosophical theology doing theology liberal theology e.t.c. These are part of the classes of theological education characterized the theoretical, speculative and technical exercises. One of the important of theological education to the Church and society is the academic task of reading and critical study of the Bible with particular emphasis on understanding the biblical languages with the goal of identifying the mind of the divine from the immediate environment to the present time.²¹

There are some professional or vocational areas of importance to the theological education in our Churches and Society, such as the identification of the pastoral studies which involves liturgical theology and homiletics, pastoral theology, evangelism, missiological studies. This aspect of theology is not common in the lectures in the Universities but which is usually taught in the theological seminary or theological schools.

Another interesting and important of theological education here is knowing as devotional. It is very interesting and important in the field of theological education because of its dealing with ministerial formation for men and women being prepared for Church ministerial calling. It is also important because of its commitment to spiritual issues focused or transforming individual involved in theological education. However, for theological education to entrench the important effect on the Church and society, the professional and devotional areas must have the academic disciplines as foundation. To agree with Thomas Aquinas thought which says that “theology is taught by God, teaches of God, and leads to God”.²²

9. The Impact of Theological Education on Christian Society

If the Church is to embrace the usefulness of theological education in our society, it must be realised that theological education is candidly on the academic discipline, ministerial formation and devotional contribution of our Church societies. It is also pertinent to say that all the above studies must identified areas of collective challenges to theologians and academics tasks the theologians on speculating about the supposed impact that theology should make on those who engage in the theological discipline. While Roman was expressing his view, he understood theology as a practical discipline, which task is about acquiring skill for living, skills that are shaped by a whole set of heritage of upheaval in human understanding, this requires a responsibility with the purpose of creating a sense of obedience in those who are affected by them.²³ Another impact of theological education is the Church is the pastoral studies. This involves the liturgical theology and homiletics, pastoral theology, evangelism missiological studies e.t.c. they are the professional or vocational areas of theological education.

10. Theological Education as Tool for Reformation in the Church (Anglican Communion)

Theological Education is one of the developments that is responsible for the growth of spiritual attainment in the Church. It was discovered that theological education is based on what the Church universal depend upon in all their spiritual development. On this theological education, Churches build their sustenance. We have the triangular shape on which theological education is build which are academic discipline, ministerial formation and devotional life. It is not out of the point to say

that these three areas have collectively thrown great challenges to theologians and theological teachers. In the area of academics, Rowan, tasks the theologians on speculating about the supposed impact discipline.

One of the ways in which Theological Education is serving as the tool for the reformation in the Church is that, there people were being taught about practical discipline which is about the task of acquiring skills for living, there we have skills that help in shaping the life of people in the society. This practical discipline also give and teach us about human understanding and how behave decently in the planted society like the Church. This requires a responsibility with the purpose of creating a sense of obedience.

Also, Theological Education is all about personal transformation, holiness and truthfulness so as to make a reform in our society: in order to make the Bible the primary record of the difference that God makes and enable it serve as the tool towards attaining the purpose of the Church in the Society. The cause of personal transformation enhances authentic development in theological Education, this is turn led the one being educated to respect and promote the values of authentic human nature. Therefore, the invitation of theological education into the folk of Christian theological education will explore theological standpoint to develop an inner set of value which assist in evolving guideline that help them in making some vital decisions.²⁴

The pastoral wing of Theological Education is the task of training the professionals who have direct contact with the society. Having themselves been developed toward becoming an agent for change in the Christian Church life God requires us to make all things new. Newness invariable by emphasizing the Gospel message the that is militating against the ills in the society and substantially, by using the agency of the Church to compliment the effort of the government by addressing neglected area like social services and other current cry for society.²⁵

11. Task of Theological Education in Serving as Tools for Development and Growth in the Church and Society

- Building upon the strong foundation of Biblica teaching serving God in a rightful manner and teaching of obedience to God.
- Training of Student humility character and putting them to obtain maximum output on completion of their course.
- Pursuing a high academic excellence through intensive research oriented study.
- To make efforts at roviding conducive environment for the congregation
- One of the task of theological education reforming the Church is to solicit for the provision and development of man power in the Church.
- To lay more emphasis on the discipline among student so as to be able to be disciplined when the get to the Church where they will be ministering.
- Theological Education stand the chance of ensuring the promotion of cherished Anglican Traditions and heritage.
- Training of the priest for better future and needing of the life of the up coming Youth in our society by giving and teaching them on how to behave in the society and how to run away from all sort of cultism.

However, in the same strength, current issues in our country such as cultism in institutions of higher learning, Terrorism corruption should not be classed as merely a cultural or political matters, ²⁵ but of religious important based on firm theological reasons teaching and concern.²⁶

Theological Education is the tool of the Church to positively affect the populace and inject the virtue of good moral disposition on the people. Whereas social between the rich and the poor, this is the cause of stratification and class differentiation, cause the Church is an agency and avenue that comprises the scripture is the original instrument of comparing their mind and medium of gaining their loyalty, where social grouping is limited, theological education exercise major control over their thinking and behaviour. It could be said that theological education is gearing toward the development of Students with critical mind capable of providing sound spiritual, moral and intellectual leadership in the Church. This requires acquisition of literary, artistic and interpretative skills needed for understanding human nature, personality and behaviour in relations to human environment.²⁷ The acquisition of skills for understanding and interpreting the Christian message of salvation the Lord Jesus Christ become necessary in that for long. “The sharp division between Western Missionary Christianity and “pagan” African culture, tends toward a joyful worship and glorification of God.²⁸ A sound theological education will help in no small measure in combating the education will help in no small measure in combating the destructive tendencies of secularism in the minds of Christians. A sound theological education will bring about meaningful contextualisation that will eventually lead to a joyful worship and God’s glorification.

In today’ modern world people’s mind are so scientifically conditioned that the notion of God being the creator and sustainer of the world has been greatly undermined. A sound theological education will enable the missionary to explain the Christian faith to a scientifically minded world in a way that the message of the gospel will be accepted. In order to put in place a sound theological education to meet the 21st Century challenges, there is need for a comprehensive overhauling of the theological colleges in terms of staffing, funding, curriculum and the recruitment of candidates.²⁹

Conclusively, this paper may not be able to contain the subject matter and the writer was able to deal with the theological education as the centre. The another of this paper exposed us the important of theological education in the Church and our Christian society. In the same way the theological education was referred to as one of the tool for the formation of character, transformation, practical discipline, training of pastor for information and dissemination of information to the Church and its community. This being the case the Anglican should endeavour to adequately found the its theological Colleges in order to make them centres of spiritual, moral and academic excellence. And that the recruitment of the Lecturers’ in our theological College should be done in such a way that those that are sent there will not see the place as a punitive ground.

Lastly, we must be remembered that sound education theologically of both clergy and laity cannot be over estimated and lead to effectiveness of the work in the Church.

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