

Title - The role of the teacher as a person in the task of theological education

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Date – December 2005

Word count - 3792

The quality of a person as a teacher and the way the role of a theological education teacher is apprehended, carried out, largely determines the calibre of theological students that will be produced. Even more, this has a bearing on the extent of the usefulness of the students in the hands of God, as well as on the mission of the Church as a whole, since the Church rises or falls depending on its leadership. It is in view of the importance of this noble task and this weighty role resting upon the theological education teacher, that a thorough investigation concerning the definition of a teacher, the spiritual requirements, professional requirements and the role of a successful theological education teacher, will be conducted.

Furthermore, the Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary correctly defines a teacher as ¹“a person whose profession or whose talent is the ability to impart knowledge, practical skills or understanding”, similarly, a teacher in the task of theological education imparts theological knowledge, understanding and practical skills to theological students as well as to those seeking theological knowledge. From the secular point of view a person becomes a teacher after studying a particular discipline and attaining higher qualifications to a certain level before he or she can begin to teach. However, from the Biblical perspective the gift or ministry of a teacher is one of the leadership gifts God has given to the Church as written in the Bible ²“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”.

Firstly, theological education teachers are initially called and appointed by God; hence it is inevitable to recognise God’s call in their lives, before engaging in this vocation. They are also gifted and talented by God, in order to enable them function in their office efficiently, however, it is necessary and important that they undergo extensive theological education training before they are involved as theological education teachers.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION REQUIREMENTS IN A THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION TEACHER

In addition, in this contemporary world when companies or organisations want to hire or recruit employees for specific professional positions to work for them, they usually advertise with conditions attached to the vacancy, for instance, educational, professional qualifications, experience, age etc. In the same vein, from Gods view point, the character or the quality of the teacher is of great value and importance. Accordingly, he has put down characteristics or qualifications in the Bible for those aspiring to leadership portfolios; as such it was written by Paul the apostle to Timothy who was a teacher “but³

¹W & R Chambers Ltd, Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, Great Britain, Edinburgh, W & R Chambers Ltd, 1973, pp 1384.

² Paul the Apostle, “*Ephesians*”, (*The Holy Bible*) *Ephesians 4:11-13*.

³ Paul the Apostle, “*First Timothy*” “*The Holy Bible*”, *1Timothy4: 12*

set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love and in purity”. Secondly, thus it can be concluded that a theological education teacher is a pattern or a role model. Moreover, Ezra seems to have comprehended this absolutely well because the Bible says in the book of Ezra, about him, ⁴“For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws to Israel” The most important point to Ezra was devoting himself to God, followed by doing or observing what was written in the Bible, in other ways spiritual formation mattered most to him, before teaching the decrees and laws to Israel. God places a great premium on being or becoming the kind of person he wants someone to be, before the doing of what is supposed to be done. Moreover, it is said that a person can give only what he or she has, on the other hand, it is also said that a person cannot lift another above his or her highest. Therefore, when a person does something that he or she has become, that thing is backed by authority and power, as was the case with Ezra. Thirdly, therefore, spiritual formation must have taken place to a certain level in the life of a theological education teacher at the time he or she embarks on this vocation, although this is supposed to be an ongoing process in his or her life.

Furthermore, theological education is defined as ⁵“the training of men and women to know, love and serve God” it is only reasonable and logical apart from it being biblical that a theological education teacher should have had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ before engaging in the practice. Moreover, spiritual formation, which is one of the crucial, factors determining the extent a person will be used of God, should have occurred to a certain level in a theological education teacher, despite the fact that it is a continuous process in his or her life.

Besides, a theological education teacher should have the love of God reigning in his or her life as well as being very patient, due to fact that people from various backgrounds, at different levels of spiritual formation, with different motivations for enrolling in theological institutions, are taught, counselled and supervised by them. Along with this, is the fact that the vocation of a theological education teacher can be very tedious at times, monotonous, with less advantageous opportunities and less financial benefits as opposed to those working in huge profit making organisations, firms or even in the civil service. Take for instance; marking of a number of essays from students year after year can be strenuous and overtaxing. Therefore, these are some of the reasons why a theological education teacher should have a sense and recognition of God’s call in his or her life to this vocation at the entry point.

In the same way, a good, successful theological education teacher should be a good listener and spiritual guide to the students. This then, calls for creating some time to give a listening ear to the theological students both as a groups as well as individuals in order to be able to assist them with problems or situations in their lives that may hinder their progress while studying at a theological institution. A theological education teacher also needs to be alert and sensitive to some needs in the lives of some students that they may not easily feel free to disclose, by initiating discussions with them on an individual basis. On the other hand, a successful theological education teacher should listen carefully to the feedback he or she gets from the student evaluations and colleagues about him or her.

⁴ The Holy Bible, Ezra 7:10

⁵Cheesman, Graham, “General Introduction to Theological Education”

PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND ROLES OF A THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION TEACHER

Admittedly, every profession has requirements to be fulfilled by those involved in that specific profession, similarly with theological education. Correspondingly, roles are connected with every profession, like wise with theological education teaching profession. What then are the professional and spiritual requirements of a theological education teacher? What are the roles of a theological education teacher?

In a nutshell, a theological education teacher is a scholar. Even more, the scholarly work of a theological education teacher constitutes: reading, learning, writing, theological teaching, research, and service. More importantly, an examination and analysis of the mentioned roles will be carried out subsequently, so as to have a clear picture of the professional and spiritual requirements and the roles of a theological education teacher. Firstly, a theological education teacher is involved with academic disciplines; these are disciplined formative practices through which the scholar pursues his or her work, namely: reading, writing and teaching. Ralph Waldo Emerson rightly said ⁶“academic disciplines are formative practices by which a scholar raises himself from private considerations and breathes and lives on public illustrious thoughts”. Furthermore, a theological education teacher should write with the following intentions in mind, to learn in the process of writing, to understand, and to communicate with others through what he or she has written. In addition, a theological education teacher should write in search of the reality and truth of what he or she is writing about. Even more, writing contributes to the spiritual formation of a theological education teacher as well as the students that are being taught in a theological institution. Therefore, a theological education teacher should also teach students the discipline of writing by often giving them written assignments in order to develop their writing skills. The discipline of writing is an academic task that sharpens the capacity of a theological education teacher for attention. In brief, writing can be a type of reading, a method of thinking, a manner of receiving, and looking at other people’s work, a path of making discoveries of solutions to penitent questions lingering through the mind.

Secondly, a theological education teacher is an extensive reader because this is one of the ways of sharpening his skills, by always keeping himself or herself abreast and keeping his or her mind informed as much as he or she can afford. Furthermore, the theological education teacher’s reading of Scripture and classics of theological responses will cause theological formation in his or her life. As such, a theological education teacher has to employ various reading methods to be successful in his or her reading, so that he or she personally benefits as well as his or her students. In addition, is a list of some of the reading strategies that can be deployed: Standard reading, Academic Reading, Proustian Reading, and Victorine Reading, which will be discussed in brief. To begin with, is the standard reading method, a most commonly used reading method due to the fact that many are trained how to use this method. In this method, reading implies the acquisition of a particular technical skill to be able to interpret written language, of making sound

⁶ Jones L. Gregory and Paulsell, Stephanie (Eds) *The Scope of our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. Eerdmans, 2002. pp 14. Quoted Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, pp 63, 64.

and learning from marks made on paper, however, the skill has basically one single modality with an intention of extracting the meaning from the passage or text for consumption for use. Improvement in technical mastery of the skill and speed is what needs to be worked at all the time.

Moreover, Academic Reading is yet another very enriching methodology of reading that successful scholars or academicians have utilized over the centuries, therefore a theological education teacher who wants to benefit personally and his or her theological students' needs to do his or her best to acquire the skills, so as to be able to maximally use this reading method. In general terms, academic readers equip themselves with the expertise needed to critique what is in their mind with the purpose of finding an authoritative object to master and use. In a solitude and silent mood the academic reader applies literacy skills to the object in his or her mind with an aim of separating facts from values and to identify facts that can be derived from an experiment, experience and observation rather than from theory or logic. The main goal of an academic reader is to search for knowledge that can be proved by facts hence; he/she deals with facts as an analytical thinker. Academic readers engage in specialized intellectual work while focusing on tightly defined question within a delimited field. Even more, academic reading offers the following benefits: students can be conversant with the skill of using facts inconvenient for their party position. The utilization of academic reading aids the discovery and advancement of technology. Finally, academic reading focuses on clarity in looking at the assumptions and implications of any position taken, but more importantly on questions of value.

Interestingly, the Proustian Reading method is a very fascinating way of reading. With this method of reading, readers read so as to be stirred up or provoked to reverie, to be moved by the catalyst of reading into the depth of memory and aesthetic sensibility. They emphasise the importance of the inner work accomplished in them by what they read as opposed to the content of what is read. They also distinguish the act of reading from the work it catalyses from the content of what is read. To sum up briefly, Proustian readers consider reading as an element in the continuation of the work of self- recreation, summoning the mind to paint beautiful pictures in the mind that in turn causes refinement of the reader's aesthetic sensibility.

What's more, Victorine readers look for and decide what to read right on the out set, bearing in mind their two major categorization of what they can read: the arts and the divine or the canon of Scripture. They draw a distinction in the reading methodology between the two categories, however, they believe that none scriptural works should not be discarded but read carefully because they always contain errors. Furthermore, intellectual and spiritual benefits can be derived from none scriptural works. Thus, the following steps are adhered to in reading the arts or none scriptural works: Firstly, through analyzing the works grammatically, syntactically and semantically with the deployment of linguistic skills. Secondly, by studying analytically, the central topic of the work that has been read and the order of thought proper to its understanding. Thirdly, the memory must be used to order and compile extracts that illustrate the analytical outline made in the second stage. The texts read must be memorized verbatim kept in the reservoir of memory from which they can be reflected upon at any time. Fourthly, there has to be a deeper analytical outline thought engagement about the implications of the works read. Amazingly, Victorines read with their focus on the knowledge and love of

God as a main goal for their reading, however, their reading also requires specifications of limits on the meaning and use of what is read.

Thirdly, and more importantly, the main role of a theological teacher is to teach theological education. This involves deep explanation and expounding of theological topics, teachings, issues etc as such a theological education teacher must be brilliant, passionate, intense, insistent, compelling and relentless. Even more, a theological education teacher has to develop teaching skills in order to effectively impart to students he or she is teaching, theological knowledge, understanding and practical skills.

Therefore, for this to be achieved a theological education teacher, behind the scenes, he or she has to read, study, research extensively. In addition, a successful theological education teacher must experiment by using different methods of teaching so as to prove which methods of teaching are most efficient for each group, for example the undergraduates, graduates and postgraduates. In brief, it is inevitable that a theological education teacher must deliver the goods of theological education as such he or she should in private prepare adequately, and must be done before and while discharging his or her duties as well as on a continuous basis.

Fourthly, the theological education teacher is a model or example by virtue of his or her task. The theological education teacher is a hero in the eyes of the theological students because of the worth of theological information he or she passes on to the students as a result they win the admiration of the students. It is only human to regard someone you admire and hold in high esteem as a hero, as well as emulate them, likewise with theological students, hence theological education teachers seriously need to look at themselves in this way, because all the time they are exerting an influence on their students consciously or unconsciously, whether they want to or not. Thus it is said and believed in Leadership strategic studies that leadership is influence, similarly, a theological education teacher as a leader exerts influence on the followers, who are the theological education students.

Fifthly, a theological education teacher is an apprentice of the lord Jesus Christ as a result he or she learns from Christ Jesus, as well as both divine writings and none scriptural writings published by others. Besides, he or she learns with an open heart, a learner who has decided to learn continuously in his or her life so as to faithfully and effectively discharge his or her duties as a theological education teacher. Therefore, as a disciple of Lord Christ Jesus, in the course of fulfilling his or her task of a theological teacher, he or she may be called upon to make sacrifices for the Lord Jesus Christ, in some cases the cost of discipleship may lead to loose of ones life because of the truth one has known in the process of research, studying, reading and writing as a theological education teacher. The theological education teacher considers the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Mentor and due to this relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she has to be involved in service in other areas of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, both at a theological institution or else where.

Sixthly, the sixth role of a theological education teacher is that of a researcher. His or her work at times demands involvement with research work either personally, or for the theological institution and at times so as to be able to assist and supervise other theological students involved in research. Therefore, a theological education teacher needs to be conversant with skills of researching.

Seventhly, the other role of a theological education teacher is writing and publishing, hence he or she has to develop and improve writing skills continuously. This is advantageous to him or her personally, and the theological students he or she teaches. Moreover, as a theological education teacher, his or her other role is to teach the art of academic writing to his or her own theological students for the sake of their work in the theological institution and even there after.

Eighthly, a theological education teacher must have an ability to relate properly and work together as a team with other members staff because he or she alone can not fulfil the purpose of the theological institution. On the other hand, he or she needs to know how to handle and work with students

Ninthly, a theological education teacher is a counsellor and must be involved in providing pastoral care to hurting students. Some students, usually quiet a good number of them embark on theological education with very painful and wounding spiritual crisis as a result they look forward to spiritual healing, renewal and transformation at the theological institution. Family relationships crises are often due to breakdown of relationships, misunderstandings, or some things that may have gone wrong in their primary relationships, for instance: between husband and wife, between parents either a son or a daughter, between a person and his fiancée etc. On the other hand, some students may have experienced crises of faith in their lives before entering the theological institutions, and if they are to make tangible progress spiritually, as well as in their theological education they have to be counselled by the theological education teacher.

Tenthly, the theological education teacher must pray or intercede for the theological students they are teaching. This should be done both privately and publicly, for example a theological education teacher can form a habit of praying at the beginning of every session for the students as well as for himself. Members of staff of the theological education institution can set aside time for prayer and intercession for the student body. A theological education teacher can also pray and intercede for his or her students individually, privately.

Finally, a theological education teacher must lead in small groups or fellowship groups and be catalyst to foster openness between members of his or her fellowship group as well as between himself or herself and each individual student. Students may open up to reveal some situations that need counselling or to be prayed for in this forum.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, after a thorough critic of the role of a theological education teacher, by way of examining the definition of a teacher, the spiritual requirements, professional requirements and both spiritual roles as well as professional roles, it can be concluded that the role of a successful theological education teacher is as follows:

Firstly, the vocation of a theological education teacher is more than an academic career, therefore a person aspiring to be a theological education teacher must sense God's call and must be motivated by religious vision and outstanding commitment.

Secondly, the vocation of a theological education teacher demands the professional training of the theological teacher in order to acquire necessary professional requirements and skills such as theological education training, teaching, writing etc.

Thirdly, the scholarly work of a theological education teacher involves learning, writing, teaching, research, and service; however, the work is mainly pursued through the first three, learning, writing and teaching.

Fourthly, since a theological education teacher is a role model/pattern or an example, as a result he/she exerts influence on the students; it is therefore inevitable that spiritual formation and development must occur to a certain level or extent regardless of the fact that this is a continuous process in his or her life.

Fifthly, a theological education teacher must be involved in counselling students and the provision of pastoral care to students.

Sixthly, a theological education teacher may be called upon to function as part of the administration team or management team of the theological education institution.

Seventhly, a theological education teacher must take part in the priestly ministry of praying and interceding for the students, fellow members of staff as well as the institution.

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