



Partnership in Financing Ministerial Training: The role of some major Stakeholders

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ABSTRACT

In biblical days, ministerial training was under experienced ministers. And it was the responsibility of these authorities to cater for their trainees—Israel did same. However presently (2024), there has been an appreciable drift. The Old Testament Israelites and the New Testament church are not different from the state in terms of how the ministers were supported by what was brought to the treasury to train ministers. For example, the church now focuses on the development of physical structures to the detriment of those who must be trained for the job. Then also is the role of parents, philanthropic bodies and individuals concerned. Here, there is a complete drift from the norm of ministerial support in so much that there is a lack of adequate financial support for ministerial training which does cost a lot of money: The burden however is on the church, society, and the state. This paper proposes the need for the state to mobilize funds to support ministerial education, just as she does for secular accredited Universities. Attempts should therefore be made to explore strategic measures to commit the state to such a prolific venture. Additionally, seminars should be organized for specific stakeholders to seek the need to prioritize ministerial training above everything else; and consider it as part of their divine obligations. Meanwhile, ministerial trainees should not sit on the fence, for heaven helps those who help

themselves. The paper concludes that the issue at stake succinctly applies to individuals as well as organized bodies.

Key Words/Concepts: Partnership stakeholders, ministerial training, ministerial schools, Old Testament (OT) Israel, New Testament (NT), Church

Introduction

In contemporary times, financing ministerial training has become a major issue. Clearly, some of the key partners of the past are now relegating their responsibilities to the background. It is about time the situation is considered seriously. That is, we need to relook at the issue and address it in its proper context, to achieve the desired expectation.

The School of Theology and Ministry of Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU), Amrahia, Accra, used to have a satellite campus at Kumasi where only certificate programs in theology were taught. On its graduation on August 22, 2015, a paper on “Partnership in Financing Ministerial Training,” was presented. It is reproduced here for the benefit of the interested reading community. The focus of this paper is not only to highlight the need for financing ministerial education, but also to discuss how some individuals and institutions can engage in some form of partnership to make the issue of financing of students in ministerial institutions more viable.

Background to Ministerial training

To address our topic, let us establish the biblical context by considering the following questions:

- a) When Samuel was given by his parents to be trained for God’s ministry, who were responsible for financing his education? (I Sam. 1:27-28; 2:11, 18-19, 26; 3:19-4:1)
- b) Who were those responsible for providing the needs of the OT Prophetic guilds that were began by Prophet Samuel (I Sam. 10:9), and later continued by Elijah, Elisha, and the other Prophets?
- c) When one comes to the NT period, “who were responsible for the upkeep of the disciples that were called and trained by the Lord Jesus Christ?”

- d) In Luke 10:2, the Lord Jesus Christ asked the disciple to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more people for the harvest because the harvest was plenty, but the laborers were few. Who was to be responsible for the needs of the respondents during their training before they could be sent?
- e) In Romans 10:14-15; Apostle Paul raised some key questions on the training and commissioning of ministers. He asked: "How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" But the follow-up questions could be, "How can they be sent when they are not trained, and how can they be trained when there are no financiers?"

All of you would probably agree with that, in this 21st Century more than in previous times, there is an increasing need for quality Ministers to counter the spate of worldliness that is engulfing the Church and the world to equip the increasing number of converts. But the big questions are: who and where are the financiers of Ministerial training?"

God: The Principal Financier

From a biblical point of view, God is the main financier of ministerial training. Yes, He is the one who calls people for His business, and it is He who trains and sends them out to do His work. Indeed, God provides all the means for anyone He calls during the period of training. God's providence is seen in terms of the way He leads the trainee into safe hands, provides means for food, shelter, protection, etc. For example, Moses was taken into the house of Pharaoh in Egypt, and then led into the house of Jethro in Midian by God, where, in both cases he received the needed training for ministry.

God was with Samuel in the days of his training in the hands of Eli at Shiloh. God made sure that the prophets and all who were involved in ministry, even in the NT period, were taken care of. It was the Lord Jesus Himself who cared for all the Apostles during their training time as disciples. God took care of Paul when he was called and directed Barnabas to care for him. As the main financier of Ministers-in-training, God has never failed in fulfilling His responsibility. He, as Father, is the one who continues to call and lead all of us to the appropriate places in Ministry.

Now, if God is indeed taking care of all those that He calls, why are we not getting all the needed support from Him? Why are there lots of financial constraints in all ministerial training institutions, and a good number of trainees under financial pressure to meet demands for stationery, resource materials and other logistics, and provisions such as food, beverages, and the like? There are key answers to these questions.

God's Key Partners and their roles

The fact is, in God's divine plan, He chooses co-workers for His work (1 Cor. 3:9; 6:1). Thus, as the main financier, He has chosen some identified groups or parties to partner Him in the business. These responsible groups constitute what I refer to as "the multi-lateral financial partners" to help God execute His purpose.

This is where Partnership in Financing Ministerial Training is embedded. And it is only when these partners of God fail in their responsibilities that financing ministerial training becomes a problem. The groups or parties involved here are the following:

- 1) the Ministerial Training Schools/Institutions
- 2) the Church and Para-Church Organizations
- 3) the State/Societies/Organized bodies
- 4) Parents/Family/Philanthropists/Concerned brethren
- 5) Trainees/Ministers themselves

Let us look at each other briefly.

- 1. The role of Ministerial training schools:** In the Bible days, ministerial schools were under the supervision of experienced ministers of the day, and it was the responsibility of these human authorities to cater for their trainee. For example,
 - It was Jethro, a Priest of Midian, and his family that took care of Moses during his period of training in the "Wilderness Theological Seminary."
 - It was Eli's responsibility to look for means to care for Samuel at Shiloh.
 - It is very likely that Samuel took charge of the members of the Prophetic guild at Naioth at Rama (I Sam 19:18 – 22).
 - Prophet Elijah, and later Elisha also shouldered the responsibilities of all under their care at places like Gilgal, Jericho, Samaria, etc. (II Kings 20-4).

- The Lord Jesus Christ himself was responsible for the care of His disciples, that is, those that were called and trained by Him.

A lot of interest groups were involved in sponsoring these trainees. But in recent periods, a lot of the ministerial training institutions appear to have lapsed in widening their support base. Attention is focused mostly on what will come from the trainees themselves and to some extent, the Church. Unfortunately, what comes out is not enough, thus placing a lot of financial constraints on these training institutions. There must be a way out.

If churches are to thrive and grow, they need skilled, experienced, and spiritually mature pastors. It is also essential that churches have strategies to develop more of these competent pastors (2 Tim 2:2). Mark Dever, Albert Mohler, Brian Croft, and other prominent evangelical leaders explain that churches have not taken their responsibility to train their pastors seriously enough, resulting in confusion, frustration, and even burnout (Dever, 2009).

- 2. The role of the Local Church:** The whole community of Israel was involved in ministerial training. Part of the food and provisions they brought to the Tabernacle were used to take care of young priests. In this way the church was playing her part either directly or indirectly. The situation did not change much in the NT period. The Lord's ministry was enhanced by the supplies that came from individual contributors and quite obviously the offerings from His congregation.

Again, it is likely that a good portion of the supplies that Apostle Paul received from the churches were used solely to take care of all the ministers in training like Timothy and Titus. Time will not permit me to elucidate the support from the Church to Monasteries over the years.

In contemporary times, there has been an appreciable drift. The Church now focuses a lot of budget and attention on the development of physical structures to the

detriment of those who must be trained for the job. Little wonder, the number of qualified personnel is a few and the untrained ministers have seized the field and are causing a lot of havoc to the ministry.

The study of Mason (2013), found among other things that, developing a strong foundation of biblical and theological beliefs is a major focus of each church training program. Forms for cultivating these beliefs among participants include reading books and articles, writing papers, discussing assigned material, attending lectures, participating in cohort study groups, attending conferences, taking seminary classes, and this approach is typically employed by a large church consisting of multiple sites that devote resources and staff to leadership development initiatives and church planting efforts. Pastors are trained as part of a larger church leadership development program that includes classes, seminars, cohort learning with multiple groups, supervised ministry experiences, formalized coaching and mentoring, and character assessment.

3. **The role of the State:** In the days of the OT when the Israelite congregation, that is, the covenant community of Israel (which may be referred to as church in the New Testament) was not different from the state, the ministers were supported by what the whole state brought to the treasury of the church. During that time, it was a “Congregation-State” partnership, where the state saw the role of the ministers as complementary, so the two organs operated as a unit.

To this end, all the OT Kings of both the United and Divided Kingdom of Israel who recognized the important role of the servants of God and supported them to play it, did well, while those who did not, failed. For example:

- Kings like David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah are prominent among those who recognized the ministry of God’s servants and did well.

- Kings like Saul, Joash, Ahab, Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, etc., who refused to recognize the role of God's servants failed.

From the First Century onwards, the situation changed; it became the State against Church and vice versa. There existed a clear separation between church and state such that each tried to exist and operate independently, resulting in a struggle for power. The church did not want the state to control it, and the state did not want the church to poke its nose into its affairs. This has been the situation from the 1st century till recently.

In our present time, the situation is more like a State-Church partnership. There appears to be an appreciable level of understanding where the Church sees that it should be playing a complementary role and acts as a major check on any government. It is however unfortunate that the state has not reciprocated this gesture; it is rather interested in sponsoring bodies and professions which are directly involved in the running of the state than those who are called to serve in the Church. This imbalance must be seriously and properly addressed and corrected by all of us.

4. **The Role of Parents/Philanthropic bodies/Concerned individuals, etc.:** The parents of Samuel used to visit Shiloh regularly, bringing with them supplies to the young minister. Also, in the OT, individuals concerned made a lot of contribution towards the upkeep of the ministers in training. In II Kings 4:42, a concerned individual brought some supplies which Elisha used to feed the prophets in training. Obadiah took care of 100 members of the Prophetic bands, (I Kings 18:3-4). During the earthly ministry of the Lord, a lot of women who had been converted supported Him (Luke 8:1-3).

Unfortunately, a lot of donor organizations, parents and philanthropic individuals nowadays have developed a biased mentality; they are more interested in the training of people in secular schools more than those in Bible schools. Some argue that since those in Ministerial training have been called for God's work, it is God

himself who will take care of them. Others do not see the prospects of ministerial training, so they do not want to invest in them. In fact, they prefer those who are pursuing programs who will graduate into very attractive professions like: Law, medicine, engineering and banking, to a Minister of the gospel. So, they directed all their resources into these areas.

- 5. The role of the Ministers-in-training:** The person at the center of God's attention and that of other financiers is the trainee. In the OT period, some individual students/trainees took the initiative to search for their needs. For example, Moses had to work as a shepherd during his training at the feet of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Again, the students at the prophetic school themselves were concerned about their needs; food, accommodation, etc., so they moved out to find these resources (II Kings 4:39; 6:1-6). Nowadays, a lot of trainees are failing to move out to seek means to address their situation.

Consequences of inadequate financial support

The lack of adequate financial support for Ministerial Training will not be without cost to the Church, society, and state. Few of them include:

- a. A lot of ministerial trainees will continue to be in need or will be under-resourced during their education. The overall effect is that the concentration of the students is divided, and their output is lowered.
- b. There are lots of genuine believers who are called by God into ministry but for lack of support will not be able to receive the required training to function effectively. Thus, only a handful of trained qualified personnel are in the field, and a lot of the untrained have seized the field and are causing havoc to the ministry and bringing shame to the Church and God.
- c. Additionally, both the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Church will be greatly affected. Qualitatively, there will be a great lack of quality Bible exegetes and apologists, a situation that can lead to a boom of worldliness in the Church. Quantitatively, the Church will become stunted in growth.
- d. The state also loses in terms of getting a lot of skilled Ministers to handle issues related to religion in general and Christianity in particular. Issues like

professional counseling on moral issues at all levels of education especially, at the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High School (SHS) levels, and even in governmental departments should be handled by well trained and qualified ministers of God. And particularly the state must be committed financially in order to achieve this goal.

Agenda for Action

Apparently, all work that honors God and renders useful service to humanity can be appropriately termed as God's work. But scripture clearly says, the work of the Minister of the gospel "is a noble task" (1 Tim. 3:1). Thus, the training of such ministers should be one of the top priorities, if not the topmost one. There is an urgent call for pragmatic actions to facilitate the financing of ministerial education. The following are a few suggestions:

1. All Ministerial Training schools should intensify their prayers and never give up crying to the Lord of the harvest to open doors of support for this noble cause. He is the God who hears and answers prayers.
2. The Church as a body is supposed to accept the challenge to raise her own support to fulfill its God-given mandate. If good portions of the budgets of our prominent churches are assigned to the training of Ministers and to Theological institutions, there will be a great improvement. Also, there is the need for the church to use its platform to educate the members to accept their responsibility as partners with God in raising people for His work of saving souls.
3. When it comes to partnership with the state, let us consider the following Ghana News Agency (GNA) report in one of the leading newspapers in the country, *Daily Graphic*, Thursday, November 11, 2010. It reads:

The Vice-President, Mr. John Dramani Mahama, has given the assurance that the government will forge a closer relationship with the church to inculcate moral and civic responsibilities in the youth. "As a government, our concerns emanate from the fact that the youth hold the key to our future and therefore need to be morally disciplined to appropriately handle their position," he said (p.16).

The above statement shows that the state is beginning to recognize the important and complementary role that the church plays in preaching against vices and turning people from wickedness to a righteous life and serving as effective watch-dogs of society. A similar report is also found on the front page of Saturday, November 13, 2010, in the same newspaper. With such awareness already created Ministerial Training institutions and the Church as a body should seize the opportunity to hold the state to be responsive to the needs of Theological institutions. Organized bodies of the Church like the Catholic Bishops Council, Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, etc., must also add their voice and consciously put pressure on the state to rise to its responsibilities as partners of God in His work. This is where state sponsorship of ministerial training takes center stage and becomes pressing. In fact, it is where the Church-State Partnership in Financing Ministerial Training should be enforced. Besides, the state should support accredited Bible schools just as it does for secular universities.

4. Additionally, conferences and seminars should be organized by Ministerial Training institutions for civil organizations, NGOs, and individuals, where they should be encouraged to see the support of ministers in training as very important, and part of their divine obligations.
5. Last, but not least, I would like to propose that Ministerial institutions and the Trainees themselves become very proactive in their approaches for the needed financial support. The attitude of waiting to receive, or the period when Ministerial trainees sat down inactively only waiting to be paid some remuneration should be a thing of the past. Now it is expected that all Trainees will become directly involved in wooing people, their family, the church, society, and the state at large, towards their support.

Sometimes, just by stepping out in faith to approach people, doors are opened to receive great support. But care must be taken, because resorting to unethical or unprescribed means to get money will not be endorsed by God and will not go

unpunished. Let us not forget about the experience of Gehazi (II Kings 5:19-27). Let us not forget that we can very much win favors even by our moral lives as Samuel was able to do and won the heart of all Israel (I Sam. 3:20). In the extreme situation, the trainee should be able to find some simple job to help meet his or her own pocket needs. There is a saying that, “service to oneself is never slavery.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, dear Ministers of the gospel who are graduating today, fellow Ministers-in-training, may I ask this question; how does the whole discussion apply to us as individuals and as a body in terms of what we must do? I believe it is high time we arose and directly approached all the identified stakeholders to convince them to support us. If we must appear before them with collection bowls in our hands, we must be prepared to do it. It will be a direct application of what the scriptures say, Matthew 11:12, “...The violent shall take it by force...” However, the question is, “Are we prepared?” It is my prayer and expectation that as God creates this awareness, all other stake-holders in financing Ministerial Training together with us will be quickened to their responsibilities to make the will of God come to pass. God bless us all.

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