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Thoughts on My Time at TST

Joseph Ogbonnaya

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To a large extent, my career interest and scholarship today gained its impetus from the ecumenical arrangement of theological colleges known as the Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto. It allows students registered at one college to take courses at another. My studies started off in 2003 as an international student at St. Michael's College where I had gone to do an MA in systematic theology with interests in political theology in a Nigerian context. Taking courses at Trinity College, the Institute of Christian Studies, Wycliffe College, and Regis College, I completed my doctorate in the philosophy and theology of Bernard Lonergan in TST. The University of St. Michael's College as my home college provided me with financial assistance by granting me a tuition scholarship.

One of the strengths of the ecumenical arrangement at TST was the mentoring program from which I benefited. Even though TST does not have funded teaching assistanceship, its mentoring program enabled me to develop competence in teaching, which allows "each student who has completed the first year of ThD or PhD ... studies ... [to] teach one class period a year."¹ There is also the possibility for collaborative teaching, where qualified students collaborate with a professor to design, lecture, and lead a seminar, and participate in grading, as appropriate. Furthermore, "a student who has achieved candidacy may be invited by a college dean or principal to teach a course within the usual TST course and instructor approval processes."²

TST pedagogy promotes research to identify new or unresolved questions or problems within various theological areas of study, which for me were questions on the relations between Western and African theologies. TST's research methodologies manifest in the requirement for research papers in most courses on offer, which enabled me develop research and writing skills. To acquire competence in various areas of research interest, students have access to all the libraries of TST and the University of Toronto. Participating colleges encourage and sponsor students to attend national and international conferences to present their ideas. I owe TST my interest in theology and globalization, which I developed and now teach as a course to my attendance, and my subsequent membership of the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development. Further research into the preliminary responses I raised in my graduate papers led to my two publications on the relations of Christianity and culture: *African Catholicism and Hermeneutics of Culture* (2014)³ and *African Perspectives on Culture and World Christianity* (2017).⁴ In these ways, TST prepares its graduates for the job market in various institutions of higher learning.

My current research interests as associate professor at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in world Christianity and African theology, Lonergan studies, modernity, globalization, and interfaith dialogue, were made possible by the diverse theological, cross-cultural, ecumenical traditions that intersect with each other at TST. Hopefully in the coming years, and with improved finances, TST will enhance its mentorship of graduate students as teachers of higher education by funding graduate assistanceship.