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of Evangelical  
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# AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

## **Consulting Editors:**

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**Subscription Services:** Flo Gehman, Christine Mumo

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**Publisher:** Scott Theological College, the publisher of *AJET*, has been accredited by ACTEA since 1979 and has been awarded a Charter in November 1997 by the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya to become a private university recognised by the Kenyan government. Scott offers university level theological education with concentrations in Pastoral Studies, Christian Education and Missiology.

**Cover:** The emblem of Scott Theological College, shown on the cover, features the Mumbu Tree, a historic and cultural landmark on the College grounds. The Mumbu Tree is used by *AJET* as a symbol of the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the Mumbu Tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

***AJET*** is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available on line in the ATLA Religion Database through BRS Information Technologies (Latham NY), and *DIALOG Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). *AJET* is also indexed in *Christian Periodical Index* and in *New Testament Abstracts* (Cambridge MA).

**Viewpoint of Articles:** The opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or sponsors.

## THE MISSING LINK

### An AJET Editorial

As we engage in the challenging task of building the Church of Jesus Christ in Africa, we all pray for many kinds of gifted people: *powerful expositors* of the Word of God who can expound the Scriptures and apply it to the lives of people, *charismatic evangelists* who can skilfully proclaim the gospel and win people to Christ, *capable teachers* who can instruct believers in the deep truths of Scripture, *compassionate pastors* who care for the flock, *capable managers* who can direct the affairs of the church, *accurate bookkeepers* who can care for the financial records of the church, *gifted musicians* who can lead the church in worship – and many more.

We long for the most gifted, exceptionally intelligent, highly trained and outstanding individuals who can provide leadership in the church. Strange as it may seem, there remains a *missing link*. The one qualification which is essential and which is so often missing in our church leadership is *faithfulness*. As Paul stated, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove *faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). As highly desirable as those other traits may be, the one essential character trait is *faithfulness*.

*Faithfulness* is not some arbitrary requirement imposed upon church leadership by the dictate of God. The shepherds of God’s flock must be *faithful* because the Chief Shepherd himself is *faithful*.

“I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!...A *faithful God* who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut. 32:4). Moreover, he is “the *faithful God*, keeping his covenant of love...” (Deut. 7:9). *Faithfulness* speaks of God’s loyalty to his covenant people. Because God is faithful in his own nature we can place our full confidence in him. What he says, he will do. Nor is he careless in carrying out his promises.

In turn, *faithfulness* is a covenant obligation of God’s people, to show the same loyalty to God and in fulfilling his will. A *faithful* leader is one who can be trusted to carry out his responsibilities. Because God has graciously saved his people and is *faithful* in keeping his covenant with them, God’s people are expected to be *faithful*. God promises that “a *faithful man* will be blessed” (Prov. 28:20). The one word of commendation awaiting God’s servants is this: “Well done, good and *faithful servant!* You have been *faithful* with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things” (Matt. 25:23).

The church of Jesus Christ has not lacked *faithful* servants who have helped to build the church. The first article in this issue was written by a *faithful* servant of the Lord. Though the late Dr. Christina Breman's missionary service in Africa was interrupted nine years ago with cancer, she never once turned away from her calling, even while she fought the battle of cancer. She plunged into intensive research of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and has provided the African evangelical church with the most comprehensive documentation of the AEA under the title, *The Association of Evangelicals of Africa*. The article in this issue, originally intended to be much longer, was written literally on her death bed as she prepared her last legacy for the church in Africa. She served the Lord to the point of death.

This issue contains the names of many *faithful* servants of God whose lives are examples of devotion, dedication and *faithfulness* to the Lord over many years. During a lecture on the life and legacy of the late Dr. Byang Kato, presented to the students at Scott Theological College by Dr. Breman, the author felt a twinge of guilt. During the last months of Byang Kato's life he was extremely busy with many commitments. It was at that time that we at Scott urgently requested him to be our graduation speaker the end of November 1975 because the original speaker could not come. He graciously accepted. Two weeks later he drowned mysteriously in Mombasa, some suggesting that this was due to fatigue and exhaustion due to overwork. How *faithful* he was!

But alas, many church leaders are *not* faithful. The *missing link* of faithfulness is found even among the gifted and well trained. Instead of pastors caring for their flock they are pre-eminently concerned about themselves. Instead of preachers diligently preparing messages for their congregations, they follow lazy instincts and preach without preparation. Instead of church leaders protecting the tithes and offerings given by God's people, they use it for themselves. This is not a new problem but it is a serious one. Solomon inquired three thousand years ago, "a *faithful man who can find?*" (Prov. 20:6). But God's promise remains true, "Be *faithful*, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). May God help us to live today as though we would die tomorrow. May we follow in the train of Christina Breman and Byang Kato.

**An Oversight:** In Volume 16.2 1997 we published an article by Dr. Victor Cole entitled, *Who is a Theological Educator?* This article was taken from *Training God's Servants*, edited by B. & N. Famonure and A.M. Chiliver, and jointly published by the Theological and Christian Education Commission and the Evangelism and Missions Commission of the AEA, 1997. You may order a copy of this book from T.C.E.C. or C.L.M.C. Please see the advertisement elsewhere in this issue for ordering instructions

# **A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF A.E.A. THE ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS IN AFRICA**

**Christina M. Breman**

*Dr. Alister McGrath, Research Lecturer of Oxford University, considers evangelicalism as the light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: "Head and heart are being brought together in a movement that is looking forward to the future with a sense of expectancy and anticipation." Yet there is an appalling ignorance about evangelicalism in academic circles and a lack of objectivity marked by stereotypes. On the continent of Africa, **The Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)** is the main ecclesiastical umbrella for African evangelical churches. This continental organisation has branches in most sub Saharan countries and is a major movement in Africa today. Any scholarly research which can provide greater understanding of evangelicals in Africa is most welcome.*

*The late Dr. Christina Maria Breman has performed a valuable service for the evangelical churches in Africa by doing her Ph.D. research on The AEA. This article, "A Bird's Eye View of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa," is a brief synopsis of her dissertation, a 600 page publication now available.*

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**The late Christina Breman** earned her B.Th. degree in 1981, an M.Th. degree in 1985, an M.Div. degree in 1986 and a Ph.D. in 1995, all from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. Beginning in 1987 she served as a lecturer in Nassa Theological College with the Africa Inland Church in Tanzania. Health reasons compelled her to return to home to the Netherlands in 1989 when she began her research on the AEA which is now published under the title, *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organisation, Members, Projects, External Relations and Message*. Prior to her death in 1998, she was also a lecturer on the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Heverlee, Belgium and served as a researcher and editor.

## INTRODUCTION

It is our purpose to give an overall view of this Association in all its aspects. AEA was founded in 1966, and since then the Association has experienced notable growth.

In the middle of the last century an (International) Evangelical Association or more correctly the Evangelical Alliance was mentioned for the first time. It was founded in London, England, in 1846 by people from the United States and Europe. This Evangelical Alliance has been the most prominent until the establishment of the Ecumenical Movement, now known as the World Council of Churches (WCC). The historical connection between the international Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches lies in the field of mission. I mention in this regard the important mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

The growth of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa is connected with the growth of Christianity in Africa. Dr. Byang H. Kato, the first African General Secretary of the AEA, says somewhere, that when he was converted in the late forties, there was hardly any Christian witness in his home land Nigeria. At present the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) of which Kato was a member, have about one thousand missionaries. They work mainly in their own country Nigeria. There are 3,000 local churches, 2,500 pastors and about 3 million people are church-members. This is a major difference from fifty years ago when Kato became a Christian.

## GENERAL SURVEY

In this article I will discuss AEA's foundation, its history and the most important themes of its General Assemblies. After that I will briefly discuss the administrative structure of AEA. Next, I will examine the four categories of members. Then, I will describe most of its projects, and I will consider the position of AEA in connection with other Christian organisations. Finally, I will discuss the theological orientation of AEA.

## THE FOUNDATION OF AEA, ITS HISTORY AND IMPORTANT THEMES OF ITS ASSEMBLIES

Two American mission agencies have played an important role in the formation of AEA: The Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA)<sup>1</sup> and the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (EFMA), which was called Evangelical Foreign Missions Association until 1991. A committee, set up by both mission agencies, led to the foundation of the Africa Evangelical Office (AEO) in Nairobi in 1962.

cies, led to the foundation of the Africa Evangelical Office (AEO) in Nairobi in 1962. A major reason for the foundation of AEO was the concern about the numerous scholarships for further theological study in America and Europe, offered by the World Council of Churches. Particularly the American evangelical missionaries in Africa were alarmed by these scholarships. They feared that the African pastors would return to Africa as liberals. Missionary Kenneth L. Downing was appointed by both mission agencies to lead this Africa Evangelical Office.

In 1966 this Office resulted in the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. The American Ken Downing was later its first General Secretary of this Association. Kato succeeded Downing a few years later and was the first *African* General Secretary of the Association. Downing travelled extensively in Africa to set up National Evangelical Fellowships.

The term *evangelical* is difficult to explain. Dr. P. Beyerhaus from Germany divides evangelicals into six categories, using as a standard their attitude towards the modern Ecumenical Movement: *new evangelicals*, *fundamentalists*, *confessionals*, *pentecostals*, *radical evangelicals*, and *ecumenical evangelicals*. Dr. K. Runia from The Netherlands on the other hand divides the evangelicals, also somewhat chronologically into three layers: 1) they go back to the (radical) Reformation; 2) they are known under different names: the Puritans in America and England, the Pietists in Germany and the Continuing Reformation in The Netherlands; 3) they are connected with the revival movements from the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The history of the AEA can be traced from the biographies of important persons in the Association and events in the period of the different General Secretaries. In this summary I confine myself to Dr. Byang Kato mentioned earlier and the present General Secretary Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo. Both were converted to Christ at a young age. Kato was destined to become a *juju*<sup>2</sup> priest - his mother had almost become a witch doctor - and Adeyemo comes from an Islamic noble *Yoruba* family. Both grew up in the *Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA)* in Nigeria, but later Adeyemo attended a Pentecostal church, and still is a member. They both went to the same Bible College of ECWA, although not at the same time. They also studied both at *Dallas Theological Seminary* in the United States and received their doctorate in theology.

The AEA expected much from Kato, when in 1973 he was appointed to succeed Downing, after Downing's office had been vacant for three years. Unfortunately, Kato only held office for just over two years. In December 1975 at the age of 39 he drowned mysteriously in the Indian Ocean. During the two years he had held office the total of National Evangelical Fellowships had multiplied from



seven to sixteen. From a small beginning Kato was able to bring growth to the movement and he initiated the establishment of an evangelical theological school in francophone Africa, the *Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST)* in the capital of the Central African Republic.

Kato, a sincere and genuine witness of Jesus Christ, saw the importance of good theological education in Africa. Until the end of the seventies the evangelicals were deprived of theological education at a university level. One of the reasons was that evangelicals were anti-theological. They considered a Bible School good enough for the education of their pastors. From The Netherlands visiting professors from orthodox Reformed Churches were sent to the school in Bangui. Visiting professors from other countries like Sweden came as well. Kato was opposed to the Ecumenical Movement, especially to the World Council of Churches, but also to the *All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)*, allied to the WCC. Kato's sudden death was a great blow to the evangelicals in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Once more there was a vacancy of some years until Dr Tokunboh Adeyemo was appointed as successor and some time later started with his work. Dr. Adeyemo is also known for his presidency of the *World Evangelical Fellowship*, a connecting organisation of national or continental evangelical alliances. Under Adeyemo's leadership the AEA has continued to grow, from sixteen National Evangelical Fellowships then to more than thirty now. Besides, there is another evangelical theological school in Nairobi, Kenya, the *Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST)*. Other projects have likewise blossomed. Adeyemo's attitude towards the Ecumenical Movement differs from that of Kato. He thought it much better to take independent initiatives than to (re)act against the Ecumenical Movement, as such a reaction leads to nothing.

In September 1994 Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo received a doctorate *honoris causa* in theology from the *Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education* in South Africa. This degree has been extended to him for having promoted the evangelical unity and for having contributed to the development of education and of Christian literature in an African context. It is interesting to note that this is a Calvinist university with a white background, which bestowed this honorary degree on an evangelical black Christian with a Pentecostal background.

Now I will mention the General Assemblies, seven of which have been held so far: the first two in Kenya, the third one in Ivory Coast, the fourth in Malawi, the fifth in Zambia, the sixth in Nigeria and the last one in South Africa. The total number of delegates increased with every new Assembly. The first General Assembly in Kenya 1969 accepted a document against the *Ecumenical Movement*. At the second in 1973, also in Kenya, decisions were made to establish the *Bangui Evangelical*

*School of Theology* in the Central African Republic, mentioned before and *Kato* was appointed as *General Secretary*. The third Assembly dealt with the *family*, a subject which *Kato* had mentioned in 1973 as an important issue. At the fourth Assembly in Malawi the theme was: *The Church in Africa Today*. The fifth Assembly in Zambia in 1987 had as the main topic: *The Following of Jesus in Africa Today*. Three new commissions were founded there - in addition to the three existing - 1) ethics, peace, and justice; 2) prayer and church renewal; 3) relief and development. The Association of Evangelicals in Africa functions for an important part through its commissions. The sixth Assembly in Nigeria in 1993 had as the main topic *Adopt a Nation*. The National Fellowships were asked to adopt a neighbouring country and to witness in that country. This plan will take seven years to accomplish. The purpose is to reach the rest of Africa with the gospel. For instance Chad was asked to adopt the Islamic Libya. It was also decided at this Assembly to change its name. The *Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM)*, to *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)*. The last Assembly, was held in December 1997 in Johannesburg, South Africa and had the theme, *Making a Difference in Africa*.

### **THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF AEA**

AEA's headquarters counts several departments and commissions and it operates through both. In this way AEA is able to provide services to churches and organisations and National Evangelical Fellowships. The commissions were there from the beginning. The total has extended from two to nine or more. The departments were organised at the end of the seventies, when Dr. Adeyemo was appointed *General Secretary*. The commissions work more independently than the departments at the headquarters. The departments are supervised by Adeyemo. At the same time several departments are allied to the distinctive commissions. The Communications Department is connected with the *Communications Commission*. There is a regional office in Chad and a semi-regional office in Nigeria. The office of *the Gospel from Africa to Europe (GATE)*, is located in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. It is headed by Pastor Dr. Joshua Sendawula from Uganda.

### **THE MEMBERS OF AEA**

AEA has four categories of members: full, associated, special, and individual.

The full members are the *National Evangelical Fellowships* in more than thirty countries. Some fellowships flourish more than others. The fellowship in Burkina Faso is an example of an active alliance.

The *associated members* are *international organisations*, directed to service,

some to Africa, others have a worldwide orientation. Their ministry can be based on missions or evangelism, but also on mass media work, health or relief.

The *special members* are mostly churches in countries, where it is not easy to establish National Evangelical Fellowships.

Finally there is a category of *individual members*, but its total is limited. Africans are more inclined to community life than to an individual life style than in the West.

## PROJECTS OF AEA

The main projects are two theological schools for francophone and anglophone Africa, in the Central African Republic and in Kenya. These faculties are of great importance for the education of prospective pastors and teachers at Bible schools and colleges. The faculties have an important function as "training institute of the trainers."

The *Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)* is a large network and service institution for evangelical theological education. The Council has been established to bring more theological institutions to a higher level of education. The Council has since its official beginning in 1977 been very active. The schools in Africa don't all have the same educational level. The Accrediting Council has as one of its tasks to try and accredit all schools in the different academic levels. Graduates of accredited schools have easier access to theological schools in the United States and Europe. ACTEA knows three types of affiliation: 1) correspondents; 2) a consortium and 3) candidates of accredited schools. An important purpose of ACTEA is to improve the theological education in the different types of Bible schools, colleges, seminaries and faculties in Africa. Another purpose is publishing information on theological education in Africa.

The *Christian Learning Materials Centre* was founded in 1981. The Centre is completely africanised at the moment. The publications are in English, French, and Swahili. Moreover, the Centre provides training, assistance, and help for the translation of its material in other African languages, such as Kinyarwanda or Hausa.

The AEA Project *Theological Education by Extension (TEE)* may in future offer an important contribution to the Christian faith by establishing the *TEE Centre for Distance Learning*, a kind of Open University with courses at different levels. We can think of a diploma for teachers in Christian Religion, a B.A. diploma in *Christian Education*, and Masters studies in that subject, and Rural Development.

The AEA Project *Production d'Évangile par les Médias en Afrique (PEMA)* can have the same impact as the TEE Project. PEMA produces television programmes, aimed at the African culture. It intends to show the African life in all its facets, in the light of the gospel. Since 1994 the Project PEMA is completely Africanized.

## POSITIONING

The external relations of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa compared to other evangelical, ecumenical, and independent organizations are analyzed. When we see the relationship with other organizations the following can be noted:

- a) The *World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF)*, the world connection of Evangelical Alliances, of which the AEA is a regional member, has tried to keep the evangelical world united. Dr. T. Adeyemo, the General Secretary of the AEA, is also chairman of the WEF. As an example of this effort I mention the offer of the WEF to the younger *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE)* - established in 1974 - to consider becoming WEF's *Evangelism Commission*. The Lausanne Committee has turned down this request. The WEF has as successor to the (international) Evangelical Alliance - established in England in 1846 - the oldest credentials.
- b) The relationship with the Ecumenical Movement, in particular the *All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)*, which is unofficially connected with the WCC, has been superficial until recently. On a personal level there are contacts with Dr. T. Adeyemo as General Secretary of the AEA, and Dr. José B. Chipenda, the General Secretary of the AACC.
- c) A relationship with the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), the Organisation of African Independent Churches, could be stimulated. It could be valuable, especially for the group of Pentecostal Churches within the OAIC.

The *Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA II)* conference, held in 1994, showed a remarkable cooperation between the different categories of Christian organizations in Africa, namely between the *African Enterprise, (AE)*, the AEA, and the AACC and OAIC. The African esteem for communal life must surely have played a role. This gives hope for further cooperation. PACLA II can serve as an example for Christian organisations in Europe, which often are less willing to advance together.

## THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF AEA

The theology of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa has been formulated in publications of Dr. Byang H. Kato, Dr. Tokunboh Ademeymo, and Rev. René Daidanso ma Djongwe. These writings unmistakably show the orthodox, Christian faith. I confine myself to the concept of these three AEA representatives concerning the African Theology.

Kato was a genuine witness of Jesus Christ, who did not give up the essentials of the Christian faith. He was in short a firm apologist of the Christian faith. Because of that attitude he came in conflict with ecumenical, more "liberal" Christians, represented in the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches. In this connection he polemized with the African ecumenical theologian, Dr. John S. Mbiti from Kenya, until recently Director of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey in Céligny, Switzerland. This Institute is connected with the World Council of Churches. Kato saw in Mbiti universalism and syncretism (a mixture of paganism and the Christian faith). Therefore Kato also rejected the African Theology, of which he considered Mbiti to be the creator.<sup>3</sup> This Theology, according to Kato, was too artless with respect to the Africa Traditional Religion(s). Mbiti once said "Africa is christianized, now it is time to africanize Christianity". Dr. J.K. Agbeti from Ghana defined African Theology as "...the interpretation of pre-Christian and pre-Muslim experiences of African peoples of God." Agbeti sees as sources of the African Theology not only the Bible, but also the material about the African Traditional Religion. Kato was fiercely opposed to this view. As stated before, Kato was destined to become a *juju* priest, but became a Christian through the witness of SIM missionaries when he was twelve years old. He recommitted his choice for Christ as Lord and Saviour when he was seventeen. We agree with the Ghanaian theologian Dr. Kwame Bediako, who writes about Kato: "Byang Kato's persistent affirmation of the centrality of the Bible for the theological enterprise in the Church in Africa must surely be reckoned to have been his most important contribution to modern African Christian thought".<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Adeyemo and Rev. Daidanso have, just like Kato, clear objections against the African Theology. Adeyemo concludes about the *Supreme Being* in the African Traditional Religion, that "the High God of the traditional African faith is no One else than the Only Living God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Adeyemo is of the opinion that through the general revelation "the traditional African peoples know God as their Creator," but they do not know God as Redeemer. On the other hand Adeyemo concludes that African Theology is "Theology of the African Traditional Religion", which he rejects as such. Elsewhere he classifies the African Theology critically as "theology of contextualization."

Rev. Daidanso from Chad considers the African Theology to be ambiguous. He also sees this theology as a "theology of the African Traditional Religions" and calls it an ethno-theology. Daidanso believes that the promoters of the African Theology make man and his problems the heart of this theology. He wonders whether under the cover of so-called African Theology, liberalism subtly finds its way in Africa.

## CONCLUSION

The British theologian, Dr. Alister E. McGrath, considers evangelicalism as a light for the 21st century. He gives reasons for this in his article "Why Evangelicalism is the Future of Protestantism," which appeared in *Christianity Today* of June 19, 1995, as a resumé of his book *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*. (His new book *A passion for truth: the intellectual coherence of evangelicalism* gives a more elaborate treatment of this subject).

Let us hope and pray that the Association of Evangelicals in Africa continues to take its responsibility seriously now it has grown up, and the influence of American missionaries has diminished considerably, and that the gospel will remain pre-eminent now that the Association of Evangelicals in Africa has been africanised. That is what Kato defended.

## LITERATURE

Christina Maria Breman, *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organization, Members, Projects, External Relations, and Message*. Zoetermeer (The Netherlands): Boekencentrum Publishing House 1996, xxii and 602 pp.

## FOOTNOTES

1. For the history of IFMA, see Edwin L. Frizen, *75 Years of IFMA 1917-1992: the Nondenominational Missions Movement*, Pasadena. California: William Carey Library 1992, 478 pp.
2. Juju comes from a French "joujou", meaning "toy". This religion is known in African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. Juju demands bloody sacrifices - also human sacrifices. According to Kato people who serve juju are hardhearted, cruel, wicked, and bloodthirsty. Cf. his article *From juju to Jesus Christ in African Challenge*, September 1962, p. 13; cf. also the article of an Anglican pastor S.C. Onwuka, "I was a juju priest" in ed. E.A. Ade. Adegbola, *Traditional Religion in West Africa*, Ibadan (Nigeria):

article of an Anglican pastor S.C. Onwuka, "I was a juju priest" in ed. E.A. Ade. Adegbola, *Traditional Religion in West Africa*, Ibadan (Nigeria): Daystar Press 1983, 471 pp., pp. 2-11.

3. The late Dr. David J. Bosch, a well known missiologist of South Africa, mentions that the term "African Theology" has been in usage since the mid fifties. Cf. his article "Missionary Theology in Africa" in *Indian Missiological Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 198, p. 112. This article was also published in the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. No. 49, December 1984, pp. 14-37.
4. Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992, p. 413; cf. also Paul Bowers, "Evangelical Theology in Africa: Kato's Legacy" in *Themelios*, Vol. 5, No. 3, May 1980, pp 33-34 and *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 5, No. 1, April 1981, pp. 35-39.

## **AFRICAN REALITIES: REVISIONING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**David M. Kasali**

*Delegates from over thirty African nations, plus consultants and theological educators from England and the USA convened at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya, January 12-16, 1998. These 235 delegates came to respond to an "Invitation to Dream," a consultation focused on "Revisioning Theological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."*

*Four papers were read and discussed, including: "Servant Leadership" by Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Integrated Curriculum" by Dr. Victor Cole, "Building Bridges with the Church" by Dr. Peter Bisem and "African Realities" by Dr. David Kasali. The consultation addressed theology in the light of Africa's realities such as poverty, AIDS, urbanisation, modernity and injustice. The following article is the keynote address by Dr. Kasali on "African Realities."*

In twenty-four months we will make history as we end the second millennium after the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. This will mark about forty years of independence in Africa. Records of historians will show that these have not been easy years for the young African nations. For the African people, liberation from foreign oppressors in the late 50's and 60's was followed by neo-colonialism by international powers, often in the service of foreign masters. A second liberation in the name of democracy in early 1990's was inevitable. However, as we end the decade and the millennium, African people are yet to know and determine where they stand. For many, the future is bleak indeed.

In the past three or four decades after independence, the African people have experienced severe challenges that have threatened to destroy their very existence. As I was writing this paper, news reached my office of the brutal murder of one of our graduate's father, mother, sister-in-law and cousins in Rwanda. Such a tragedy is not new to Africa. We are living witnesses of the

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destructive evil that has been unleashed on the continent. As Rev. Jose Chipenda warns us, "we live in a world troubled and fractured, whose problems deserve the serious attention of politicians, church leaders and the public at large."<sup>1</sup>

This paper has three aims: first, to make us understand the extent of the challenges that lie ahead of us as Christians, pastors and educators. Secondly, I would like to challenge us to become active participants instead of passive and pessimistic Christians in the search of lasting solutions to these challenges. Thirdly, I am convinced that if changes are to occur, the church in Africa and world-wide has to become an active agent of change. In order to be credible, we will have to demonstrate personal and corporate commitment in the implementation of practical and lasting solutions.

### **AFRICA, A LAND OF BLESSING**

The present realities do not reflect the potential that Africa could unleash. In his book, *Is Africa Cursed?*, Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, describes four resources with which God has blessed Africa, namely, natural resources, energy resources, human resources and spiritual blessing.

Describing the minerals of Africa, Kul Bhushan and Frank Barton call the continent, "The Poor Rich Africa."<sup>2</sup> In comparison with the rest of the world, Africa has 72% of gold, 70% of diamonds, 27% of bauxite, 20% of copper, 12% of natural gas. Africa has some extremely rare minerals for modern technology (e.g., atomic and nuclear power). Africa produces 35% of the world's uranium, 64% of cobalt, 40% of platinum and 80% of titanium. Africa also produces about 10% of the world's crude oil.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the above natural wealth, Africa produces only 5% of the world's minerals. The income from Africa's mineral resources benefit mostly the few elite and many European owned companies who operate freely in a free Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Jose Belo Chipenda, "Being the Church in Africa," unpublished paper.

<sup>2</sup> Kul Bhushan and Frank Barton. *Africa Factbook Basic Data on and for the Continent*. (Kenya: Newspress International Press Institute, 1989), 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem.*, 23.

## SOME CHALLENGES FACING AFRICA TODAY

In his book, *The African Condition*, Ali Mazrui, a famous African thinker, describes Africa as a continent of paradox.<sup>4</sup> In spite of the abundant resources, African countries are facing serious problems. Africa is the most marginalised continent politically, economically and socially. In recent years, the continent has served as host to mercenaries, aid agencies and philanthropic organisations. As Tokunboh Adeyemo ironically asks, "Is Africa Cursed?"

Some of the issues facing Africa today include power struggle, tribalism and ethnicity, war and arms race, refugee problems, economic decline, population increase, poverty, urbanisation, modernity and identity crisis, structural injustice, Islam, environment and education. Our thesis is that God is concerned with both the spiritual and physical needs of the people. Therefore, the church has a moral and biblical obligation to seek to address the above issues and to make a lasting impact in the social fields.

### Power Struggles and Politics

Power struggles in Africa's post-colonial era has prompted confusion, despair and insecurity in the continent. In an article entitled, "East Africa Leaders Urge Unity," published in the Kenyan *Daily Nation* of January 6, 1998 on President Daniel Arap Moi's inauguration as the continuing President of the Republic of Kenya, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda said,

Our three countries (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania) are very young and have many problems, and elections are part of those problems. People should, therefore, address real issues afflicting the people and not just fight for leadership.<sup>5</sup>

In Africa, the political situation is often a reliable barometer of economic and social conditions. After independence, colonial governments were replaced by African leaders who established a one-party rule. In some countries, presidents became so powerful that they demanded total allegiance and praise from their people. Such was the case with Idi Amin Dada of Uganda, Mobutu Sese Seko of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Bokassa of the Central African Republic. This situation led to political instability, contests for power, coups and military rule.

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<sup>4</sup> Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (London: Cambridge University, 1980). I highly recommend this book.

<sup>5</sup> "East Africa Leaders Urge Unity" in *Kenya Daily Nation*, January 6, 1998.

However, as George Kinoti points out, "in the late 1980's it became clear that autocratic rule was killing Africa economically and socially and that a dead Africa was of no use to anyone."<sup>6</sup> The exercise of democracy that started in the early 1990's has turned out to be a difficult game for Africa. As Kinoti adds,

The task of democratising Africa is beset with numerous obstacles. Consider just four of them. First, the majority of Africans have little or no education and therefore are in no position to understand the real issues or to make informed decisions. Consequently, they are easy prey to political manipulators. Secondly, there is the widespread poverty which makes corruption almost inevitable and voter buying easy...Thirdly, we must resolve the problems of ethnic and religious differences...Finally, we must deal with the interference of powerful foreign forces that have much to loose if Africa becomes a well-managed society.<sup>7</sup>

Africa has to develop an "African Democracy" in African terms in the light of African cultural, social and economic contexts. Otherwise, we will continue to imitate the West and thus remain second best. The continent needs governments that represent the interests of their people. Democracy cannot work when the people of Africa do not have the basic necessities. Democracy must be backed by economic progress. Since African nations have accepted multipartism, there is need for strong opposition and not tribal parties and politics. Such opposition should present reliable alternatives and play decisive role in the building of the nations within the meaning of democracy.

### **Tribalism and Ethnicity**

In her book, *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara*, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch defines "tribalism" as "the conscious manipulation of an ethnic sentiment."<sup>8</sup> According to her, tribalism was created by the colonisers, then adopted by local peoples as a form of resistance, and was ultimately developed into a political factor (*Africa*, 101). She contends that,

Tribalism today is the final manifestation, debased by colonialism, of pre-colonial 'ethnic sentiment'...The concept of ethnicity, although accepted...by Africans themselves, was in many cases imposed by the colonisers upon hitherto undifferentiated groups. During the colonial period, the administrator and the ethnologist combined their efforts in

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<sup>6</sup> Kinoti, *Hope*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Kinoti, *Hope*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Africa: Endurance and Change South of the Sahara* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1985), 101.

order to settle various migratory peoples. It was at that time that the ethnic groups were, to a great extent, fabricated, both to facilitate political and administrative control and for religious purposes.<sup>9</sup>

Tribalism and ethnicity present such a challenge to Africa that the Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA) dedicated a whole book on this issue in its 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Johannesburg, South Africa, in December 1997. In the Introduction of the book entitled, *Tribalism and Ethnicity*, Dr. Elie Buconyori, the editor of the book and Secretary of the Theological Commission of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, asserts that

tribalism and ethnicity can be considered as the basis to several conflicts which are tearing up the African continent. This evil affects so many people that some analysts think that all Africans are affected one way or the other...Tribalism and ethnicity have become major enemies of the development of the human being in general and the African person in particular.<sup>10</sup>

In many African countries, tribalism as an acceptable social and political fact cannot be denied. Tribal affiliation often dictates the position and service one gets within the society. While the concept of ethnicity is not evil in itself, it has been distorted by political leaders and also church leaders who manipulate popular ethnic feelings for their own purposes.

Tribalism spreads like cancer. It leads to political, social and economic ills. Therefore, tribalism should not be tolerated by Christians. While recognising the place of ethnicity and diversity, the church should promote the concept of the people of God as a new family of all believers regardless of tribes.<sup>11</sup>

### **War and the Arms Race**

At the occasion of President Moi's inauguration on January 5, 1998, President Museveni of Uganda gave a strong warning to the people of Kenya.

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<sup>9</sup> Vidrovitch, *Africa*, 98,99. Cf. Michael Crowder, *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 8, from 1940-1975 (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1985), 154-159.

<sup>10</sup> Elie Buconyori, ed. *Tribalism and Ethnicity* (Nairobi: Christian Learning Materials Centre, 1997), 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> See contributions of Stanley M. Mutunga, "Toward a 'Wa Kwetu' Without Strangers," and Marc Mercer, "Tribalism and the Division of the Monarchy" in *Tribalism and Ethnicity*, 9-112.

I have heard some Kenyan opposition leaders saying that they will cause chaos because they failed to get the presidency. I would like to tell them that I know and understand chaos very well, more than many people....Your Ugandan brothers asked me to plead with you to avoid chaos at all costs. We in Uganda have seen all sorts of chaos and bloodshed and I tell you it is bad.<sup>12</sup>

Power struggle, tribalism and ethnicity have been at the root of many wars in Africa. After independence, African nations did not hesitate to invest a lot of money to build up military power. "Having an armed force was as much part of the accoutrements of sovereignty as having a national flag or a national anthem."<sup>13</sup> African governments spend a lot of money to build up military might in the name of national security. It is estimated that in the early 1990's, there were over 50,000 Cubans and 20,000 Russians in Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique alone.<sup>14</sup> These forces have helped maintain totalitarian regimes at the expense of the welfare of the people. They are used to overthrow duly elected leaders and to ravage whole regions and tribes, leading often to untold human misery.

### **Refugee Problem**

Political instability leads to economic instability, to social unrest and to civil war, causing the loss of many innocent lives and an extensive displacement of thousands of people. It has turned Africa into a huge refugee camp.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that 125 million people live outside of their countries of origin. According to the UN, 13.2 million are refugees.<sup>16</sup> Africa has the largest number of refugees due to ethnic and political conflict and to natural calamities. As Tokunboh Adeyemo notes,

Suddenly, a new class of people has emerged in Africa, the in-between people...Ruthlessly uprooted from their places of birth, thousands of refugees roam aimlessly in the urban centres of Africa. They are not only homeless and jobless, in most cases they are equally hopeless.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "East Africa Leaders"

<sup>13</sup> Crowder, *History of Africa*, 87. Cf. Donald George Morrison, Robert Cameron Mitchell and John Naber Paden. *Black Africa: A Comparative Handbook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Irving Publishers, Inc., 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, "The Church in Africa Today." unpublished.

<sup>15</sup> See Mazrui, *African Condition*.

<sup>16</sup> Harvie M. Conn, "Refugees, the City, and Missions" in *Urban Mission*. Vol. 15, No. 2, December 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, "The Church in Africa Today." Unpublished paper.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Nairobi, there were over five million refugees in Africa in the early 1990's. The number increased every year following unrest in countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Central African Republic, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Psychological problems, dehumanisation, hunger, lack of education and social and economic pressures on the host countries are only some of the problems that go with the issue of refugees.

### **Economic Decline**

In spite of the great wealth in raw materials, cultivable land, and potential energy resources, African economies are in many respects the poorest in the world. The African continent is facing a severe economic crisis. The average per capita income of African countries is less than one-eighth that of Middle Eastern nations, one-half that of Latin American countries, and one-fifth that of Southern Asian countries.<sup>18</sup> According to the "World Development Report," the Gross National Product for African countries grew at an average rate of 4.2% a year from 1965 to 1980. Between 1980 to 1989, it declined to an average of 2.1% per year, a decline of 50%. Between 1960 and 1990, the agricultural production increased by 2% while the population growth was 3.1% over the same period.<sup>19</sup> The sharp decline in agricultural production means that Africa cannot feed its people.

Mining and manufacturing sectors are also in the decline. The poor economic performance of the African economy can be attributed to many factors: natural calamities, openness of the African economy to world trade inequalities, incompetent governments, mismanagement, population growth, low educational standards, tribalism and corruption.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Donald George Morrison, Robert Cameron Mitchell and John Naber Paden. *Black Africa*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1989), 57.

<sup>19</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *Africa's Development Crisis: Agricultural Stagnation, Population Explosion and Environmental Degradation* (Washington DC: Global Coalition for Africa, 1991), 53. See also contribution from Benjamin K. Acquah, "The African Economic Crisis: A Review of the Present State of the African Economy" in *Vision for a Bright Africa: Facing the Challenges of Development* (Nairobi: The African Institute for Scientific Research and Development, 1997), 45-48.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Kinoti, *Hope*, 36-65, and Acquah, "African Economy" 55-58.

### **Population Increase**

The population in Africa is a serious concern. In the early 1990's, the population of the world was estimated to be 5.5 billion people. 842 millions were added in the 1980's alone. It is thought that the capacity of the world to feed its population will reach its optimum in 12 billions. Africa's population has more than doubled from 210 million in 1960 to about 490 million in 1991. It is estimated that Africa's population will rise over 700 million by AD 2000, and to more than double to 1,800,000 in 2050.<sup>21</sup> Some of the reasons for the increase are a better survival of children to adulthood, a high rate of women's fertility (6.5 children per woman of productive age), and an African worldview that sees many children as a blessing.

The problem is that the African population is growing faster than the economy of the continent. "The annual growth rate in the continent's total production of goods and services (Gross Domestic Product) was only 0.8% during the 1980's (1980-1988), while the population grew at the rate of 3.2%."<sup>22</sup>

The population increase in Africa has resulted in serious consequences such as mass poverty, urbanisation and its problems, land ownership and education. The Church of Jesus Christ must play a leading role in this area. We must recognise that every African child, teenager and adult is created in the image of God. He or she needs love. We must encourage parents to have the number of children they can support. The church should be active in promoting food production. Services should be improved in rural areas in order to keep people from migrating to cities.

### **Poverty**

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, "there is thus a growing trend towards a concentration of poverty in Africa. Between 1979 and 1985 the number of African people below the poverty line increased by almost two-thirds, compared with an average increase of one-fifth in the entire developing world." That number is expected to grow rapidly from 250 million in 1985 to more than 400 million toward the year 2000.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Bhushan and Bartaon, *Africa Factbook* 18; also, Alan Rake, ed., *New African Yearbook* (France: Publications Ltd.) 1997-98.

<sup>22</sup> Kinoti, *Hope*, 62.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Development Program. *Human Development Report 1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 184-85.

In spite of its natural, mineral, energy, human and spiritual resources, Africa today is the least developed region of the world. According to the United Nations records, 26 out of the 31 least developed nations are in Africa. The majority of Africans live in deplorable mass poverty. The consequences of poor African economy has led to extreme poverty and dehumanisation of many Africans who are reduced to beggars instead of partners. Hunger and diseases have become part of daily life. "One out of three Africans does not have enough to eat... Tens of millions of African children suffer from malnutrition, which means retarded physical and mental development, disease, disability or death."<sup>24</sup>

Africa is plagued by diseases some of which have been eliminated in other parts of the world. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy and river blindness are still rampant in Africa. AIDS and Ebola are among the diseases that are now devastating the continent. Many Africans are suffering from poor health. Livestock and agricultural plants are also being destroyed by diseases.

All over Africa, people are suffering from high cost of living, high inflation and unemployment. According to Adebayo Adedeji, if no major economic changes take place in the near future,

the picture that emerges is horrendous; Africa would become even more economically dependent than it is at present; its economy would be more open and exposed. The region would require more food imports and more food aid to feed its teeming populations. Over 90% of all its capital goods requirements would be imported, and critical intermediate goods, such as fertilisers and cement, would be imported. On the social side, the deterioration in the quality of social services which has already begun, would accelerate. Access to education, health, potable water and electricity would be available to a diminishing minority; famine, riots and crimes would escalate. In brief life would be short and brutish...<sup>25</sup>

Kinoti identifies the following causes of the economic decline and poverty in Africa: incompetent governments, unjust international economic systems, evil aspects of African culture such as disregard for time, poor management, widespread illiteracy and low educational standards.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Kinoti, *Hope*, 15-16.

<sup>25</sup> Adebayo Adedeji, "The Monrovia Strategy and the Lagos Plan of Action: Five years Later" in *Economic Crisis in Africa: African Perspectives on Development Problems and Potentials*, Adebaji and T.M. Shaw, eds. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1985), cited by Acquah, "African Economy" 43.

<sup>26</sup> Kinoti, *Hope*, 35-65; cf. Vidrovitch, *Africa* 115, 319.



### **Urbanisation**

Three patterns of human migrations were established in Africa by the year 1940: (1) migration to areas of export-oriented agriculture (e.g., coffee and cotton farms in Uganda); (2) migration to areas of employment in mines and industry; and (3) migration to employment in cities.<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that over 30% of Africa's population lives in cities. Urban migration has increased since independence in such a way that urbanisation has become a major problem. As Aylward Shorter points out, the consequences of urbanisation is frightening "on the peri-urban surroundings, on the human rejects that it casts aside and, above all, on the dehumanised urban rich that it cherishes."<sup>28</sup>

"By the year 2005, estimates the United Nations, urban areas are expected to be home to more than half of the world's people."<sup>29</sup> Many people migrate to cities in hope of a better life, education, business, entertainment and the promised good life in cities. However, many end up living in extreme poverty with shattered hopes, broken lives, emptiness, violence and humiliation. Other problems of urbanisation include housing, crimes, unemployment, street children, lack of medical and educational services and transport.

### **Modernity and Identity Crisis**

The identity crisis in Africa started with the population movements in colonial times. These movements created unprecedented social relations and interactions in heterogeneous environments. In his book, entitled, *Power Shift*, Alvin Toffler says,

A new civilisation is emerging in our lives...This new civilisation brings with it new family styles; changed ways of working, loving, and living; a new economy; new political conflicts; and beyond all this an altered consciousness as well...The dawn of this civilisation is the single most explosive fact of our lifetime.<sup>30</sup>

Today many Africans are caught up between tradition and modernity, between the old and the new, between the universal and the particular, between us and me, and between people and things. Consciously or unconsciously many are asking the question, "Who am I?" In Nairobi, "I am going home" often means

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<sup>27</sup> Crowder, *History of Africa*, 145.

<sup>28</sup> Aylward Shorter, *The Church in the African City* (Geoffrey Chapman, 1991), 137.

<sup>29</sup> Conn, "Refugees", 3.

<sup>30</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Power Shift* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991).

going to a second home upcountry in the village. There, a "civilised" Nairobiian is quickly transformed into a peasant and fits well in the two worlds. Chances are that his children would not fit in as well as he does.

Traditionally, Africans live in a dynamic world of the visible and invisible. The balance between the two has to be maintained at all cost. Any upset of the equilibrium is thought to bring social and natural disasters, such as prolonged drought, famine and death. "Keeping a proper undiluted ritual distance from all forms of evils or, stated positively, maintaining a cosmological balance through divination, sacrifice and appeal to the invisible powers has been the centre piece of African religiosity."<sup>31</sup>

With education and globalisation, traditional values are quickly collapsing, especially in cities, often leaving behind frustration and emptiness. Many Africans do not know who they are. While new generations are promoting Western life-style, old generations spend a great amount of time lamenting the present situation and narrating how great it was in the past; in local terms, this is referred to as, "when we were." The shift from ethnicity to pluralism has left Africa with a crisis identity. It is estimated that in the 1980's, over 100,000 educated Africans left the continent in search of a better life, often meaning secular modern life dictated by materialism.<sup>32</sup> Things have become more important than people. The Church has an opportunity to adapt the gospel message to an African context in search of a context.

### **Islam**

While Islam is an old phenomenon in Africa, its expansion took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw an increase of Islam, often as a reaction to colonialism and secularism.

Many African nations have fallen prey to Islamic expansion because of severe economic crises. Political leaders look for and accept grants from Islamic nations in order to develop their countries, thus providing an opportunity for Islam to expand. Thirty-one African countries have more than 10% Muslim populations. The first ten are Egypt (51.50 M.), Nigeria 40.20 M), Algeria (29.10

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<sup>31</sup> Adeyemo, "Africa Today."

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Hitchens, "African Gothic," in *Vanity Fair*, Nov. 1994, 96. Cf. Vidrovitch, *Africa*, 109 and 298.

M), Morocco (29.10 M), Sudan 20.40 M), Ethiopia (18.30 M), Mali (90.40 M), Tunisia (9 M), Somalia (8.50 M) and Senegal (7.7 M).<sup>33</sup>

## **A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO AFRICA'S CHALLENGES**

The African problems are structural and historical. Many Africans are trapped in a vicious cycle. If Africa has been so much blessed by God, why is the continent bleeding? We have often directed our fingers to politicians as the cause of our disaster. Today, the Lord is directing his finger upon you and me. "YOU are the salt of the earth..." (Matt. 5:13). If the responsibility of Africa is upon us, two questions emerge. First, what role is the church playing in the rebuilding of the walls of Africa? Secondly, what role are African theological schools playing in equipping the Church to fulfil its role?

### **The Role of the Church**

The African crisis is more spiritual and human than economic. The African situation presents to the church both in Africa and abroad a challenge and an opportunity. If the church does not respond now and decisively, the enemy will continue to gain territory. We have to present to the African people the whole council of God, a message of life, of redemption, of reconciliation, of rehabilitation and of reconstruction.

#### **1. A Message of Life or Death**

The urgency of the situation is a matter of life or death. The Bible contains good news for Africa. However, this news has to be pure in form and function in order to make a difference. Africa needs life, not leaders or missionaries. If the so called church leaders and missionaries do not give life, Jesus' life and their lives, the gospel will never change Africa. Africa needs servants, not opportunists. The roots of power struggle, tribalism, poverty and traditional beliefs are so deep that it will take men and women of prayer, of the Word and of vision and action to uproot the strongholds of the enemy.

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<sup>33</sup> "30 Days Muslim Prayer Focus. 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30 January 1998," and "Ministry in Islamic Contexts," Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization) 1996; Vadrovitch, *Africa*, 105.

## **2. A Message of Redemption**

Africa needs a visible demonstration of the love of Jesus Christ in words and deeds. Only redeemed souls can experience the love of Jesus beyond human suffering. The mystery of the gospel is well expressed in John's words, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are" (1 John 3:1). The church should be actively involved in leading men and women to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

## **3. A Message of Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is the central message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10). Only under the cross of Jesus Christ can Tutsis be reconciled with Hutus, Kikuyus with Kalenjin, Hundes with Banyamulenge.

It is this task that the Lord has given us. We cannot relegate this task to politicians and to secular agencies. Otherwise, failure is guaranteed. Only you and I can be agents of true reconciliation. People do not need to be murdered. Jesus has been murdered for them.

## **4. A Message of Rehabilitation**

Generally speaking, the Church of Jesus Christ has remained in the periphery of the struggle for social and economic welfare of the people of Africa. This does not need to be so. The church still has a strong force, a weighty voice and credibility in many African societies. As we face the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it is proper for the church to wake up and unleash its spiritual, human, and economic forces to give hope, dignity and identity to the African people.

## **5. A Message of Reconstruction**

A number of African theologians are calling for a paradigm shift from liberation to reconstruction, from exodus to post-exodus rebuilding. In his book, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War*, Professor J.N.K. Mugambi argues that this shift is necessary because of the changes that have taken place in Africa during the 1960's, 1970's and

1980's, and because of the "New World Order" after the end of colonialism, apartheid and the cold war.<sup>34</sup>

The church must build successful models of hospitals, schools, businesses and models of leadership as examples of how general society should be built. We have talked too much. It is time to deliver with practical and visible examples.

### **The Role of Theological Schools**

As Professor Mugambi rightly says,

Christian theological reflection is essential for the healthy development of any church. A church which is incapable of producing its own theologians cannot be said to be mature...St. Paul articulates general theological principles derived from the gospel as he understood it, then makes specific recommendations applicable to the particular problems raised by the congregations to whom he addresses his respective epistles.<sup>35</sup>

A church without theology will remain superficial; a church without theological reflection will be irrelevant. Only a school that goes deep into the study of the Word of God will be able to articulate relevant principles to respond to specific problems in society.

Following the 1983 AIAA manifesto, we theological educators in Africa must be committed to the following points,

1. Relevance to the African context. Our training must be sensitive to the African context.
2. Servant moulding. We must train servants of servants, not bosses.
3. Integrated programmes. We must focus on both academic knowledge and practical skills.
4. Churchward orientation. Theological schools exist to serve the church. We must orient our teaching churchward.

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<sup>34</sup> J.N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 1995), 1-7; 18-33.

<sup>35</sup> *Idem.*, 1.

## CONCLUSION

To many observers in both Africa and the West, Africa is in the process of change. The main question is, "changing to what?" If Christians continue to remain on the periphery of the struggle for change, they will lose great opportunities to Islam, to secular governments and to traditionalists.

The church must re-establish itself as an authority and an agent of change by reasserting its moral and spiritual authority in the management of human affairs. We must come to the realisation that the African crisis is more spiritual than economic. The devil is unleashing his demonic power to control and destroy mankind. Political power has gone to the hand of unscrupulous politicians who do not fear God but use demonic power to remain in power, and political power to crush instead of building lives created in the image of God. In the face of such a challenge, the church must build resistance against demonic posers in words and deeds. Christians must get more and more involved in politics and in all the levels of human affairs.

The church has an opportunity to become a major mechanism for change in bringing solutions to the African crisis and thus become the salt and light the Master has called it to be. Without the church, the hand of the devil will weigh heavily on the management of African affairs. We have the responsibility and the mandate from Jesus Christ, the King of the universe. Let us rise up to the challenge.

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# THE CHURCH IN THE ARENA OF POLITICS

***Alfred Muli, Editor***

*The Nairobi Fellowship of Theological Colleges (NFTC) comprises eight theological institutions of higher learning in the Nairobi vicinity which meet together for fellowship during an annual sports day. They also conduct an annual symposium in which the institutions prepare various papers for presentation and discussion. On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1998 the NFTC convened their annual symposium at the Pan Africa Christian College in Nairobi. The topic of discussion was "The Church and Politics." Various position papers were presented and rebutted.*

*The following paper was presented by the students at Scott Theological College. The academic staff sponsor and editor of the paper was Pr. Alfred Muli. Hopefully, this symposium marked the beginning of a serious effort to grapple with the question, "What is the role of the church in Africa's political development?" The process has only begun. The following paper provides food for thought and further reflection.*

## INTRODUCTION

We believe the primary role of the Church of Christ in Africa's political development is to be "the voice of Yahweh on earth." The church is to be God's mouthpiece on earth. This role can be achieved through preaching, teaching and writing about the biblical instructions concerning different parties involved in a country's politics.

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A country's politics involves the church, the political leaders and the ones led. We strongly propose that the Church of Christ will fulfill its divine and sacred role in Africa's political development by becoming "the voice of Yahweh on earth."

We will now proceed to make four proposals on how the church can accomplish this task.

## **PROPOSAL ONE**

*The church must be aware of the biblical teaching about her role in the world if she is to fulfill her sacred role. Let us then consider the biblical teaching about the role of the church in the world.*

### **1. The Two Kingdoms**

The Scriptures reveal to us the presence of two kingdoms, existing at the same time side by side. One is the Kingdom of God whose subjects are all true believers in Jesus Christ. The visible representation of this kingdom is the church. The other kingdom is the dominion of darkness, which in part is visibly represented by government or state.

### **2. The Church in This World**

a) Although the Church of Jesus Christ lives in this world, the church has her "membership" and her true home in another world. The Church of Jesus Christ is a spiritual body; it is the spiritual society to which persons are added when they become Christ's disciples.

b) Christians, therefore, must live in tension while they are, on the one hand, required to identify with the people of God (1 Pet. 1:15), on the other hand, they must also identify with the people of the world (1 Cor. 9:22).

c) God has called his people to "come apart" and be separate (2 Cor. 6:17). Yet Jesus also commanded his disciples to "go into the world" and "go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in" (Matt. 28:19; Luke 14:23). A person can not go into all the world and be a witness for Jesus and yet at the same time remain a hermit, completely isolated from people (Acts 1:8).

### **3. Evangelism Versus Social Action**

The modern debate over the role of the church in society often pits evangelism and social action against each other. Several views have been advanced.

a) Some say that the church should only seek to win people to Christ. They point to all the things that Jesus never did: He never founded a political party; never challenged the power of Rome; never sought political office; and never sought to change the laws of the state. If we would just win people to Christ, it is argued, then people would be transformed, and they would change the world around them. Being involved in social action is often seen as too much a substitute for evangelism.

b) Others advocate social action - active involvement in seeking to change the ills and structures of society. This often involves seeking to make changes in the laws, the government structures, the economy, etc. This almost always leads to some political involvement and confrontation with government. Persons who advocate social action sometimes see evangelism as not enough. They want to see the oppressed treated with fairness, unjust laws reformed, inhuman practices abolished, unrighteous rulers removed from power.

c) In reality those who emphasise evangelism and those who emphasise social action are not that far apart. They are emphasising two aspects of Jesus' commands to the church. The two need not contradict each other. The mission of the church in this age should involve both. This is the position that is advocated in this paper.

#### **4. The Role of the Church in the World**

a) First and foremost, the church should proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

b) Secondly, the church should build up believers in the faith and equip them for service in God's Kingdom. God wants the church to teach and train believers until they become mature in their faith (Eph. 4:11-13). This is the church's discipleship emphasis.

c) Thirdly, the church is required to have a strong moral influence for truth, righteousness, and justice in the world (Matt. 5:13-14). This call to be salt and light is the church's social action emphasis. The church should proclaim God's standards of righteousness and judgement, demonstrate God's righteousness and mercy in everyday living, and pursue social justice in government affairs.

d) Fourthly, the church should defend and help those who cannot speak out for themselves. "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and the needy" (Prov. 31:8, 9).

e) Fifthly, the church ought to seek to rescue the innocent from destruction, to save people who will be killed without cause. "Rescue those who are being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we

knew nothing about this does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" (Proverbs 24:11-12).

f) Sixth, the church ought to relieve the sufferings of those who are oppressed, showing kindness to those in need. "Whoever is kind to the needy honours God" (Proverbs 14:31b; Amos 2:6-7). "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering" (Hebrews 13:3).

g) Seventh, the church ought to call upon God to defend the afflicted and to judge the oppressor. "He [God] will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor... for he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight (Psalm 72:4, 12-14).

h) Eighth, Christians should pray for those in governmental authority (I Tim. 2:1-2). This activity of prayer is closely linked with the desire of God for all people to come to know Christ Jesus (I Tim 2:2-4). God wants His people to pray for government leaders so that the nation can have an opportunity to come to Jesus Christ.

i) Ninth, the Christian should also be a strong moral influence for righteousness. Jesus said that His followers should be "the light of the world" - driving out darkness; and "the salt of the earth" - preserving society from further decay (Matt. 5:13-16). The Christian should seek to exercise an influence for justice and righteousness in all areas of society, including the government. Various proverbs speak to the truth of the good influence of God's people (Prov. 11:11; Prov. 28:2).

## PROPOSAL TWO

*The church must preach, teach and write on what the Bible teaches about leaders in order for the government leaders to understand God's expectation of them and in order for them to lead the nation accordingly. Let us now examine the biblical teaching about the political leaders. We will do so by drawing some biblical principles.*

### **1. The Civil Government is a Divine Institution (Rom. 13:1,2).**

*Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels*

*against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves.*

Civil government came "from God" ('υπο or *hupo*), and it is both "appointed by" (τεταγμεναι or *tetagmenai*) and "ordained by" (διαταγη or *diatage*), God. This points to the fact that the civil government owes its existence to God. It is God's establishment. God is the author.

This is the reason why believers must obey the rulers. It was an already familiar truth to the Jews, who constituted a great majority of Paul's readers. They knew it was God who set up and overthrew leaders, and that no one exercised authority unless God set him up (2 Sam. 12:8; Jer. 27:56; Dan. 2:21).

It meant that government rulers exercised, delegated and derived authority. Their authority was limited. This truth implied that the government is also given to the Lord Jesus (Mt. 28:18). Weaver in his book, *The Christian and Civil Government*, believes that to deny the fact that all civil government must be biblical is to deny the kingship and lordship of Christ. This biblical principle then must be viewed as God's standard or ideal which every civil government must pursue.

Peter refers to the government as a "human institution" (ανθρωπινη or *anthropine*),. This rendering does not seem to refer to "institution of God among men," as NIV translates it. The word for "human" is adjectival which has nothing to do with divine. Charles Bigg offers an excellent comment here when he says, "The idea involved is that, while order is a divine command, any special forms of civil government by consuls or kings, republican or monarchical, are mere means of carrying out God's design for the welfare of society, depend upon the will of man and are in themselves indifferent" (Bigg 1901:139).

So the civil government is ideally and objectively an ordinance of God but it is in reality and subjectively an ordinance of men. Hence in reality different governments respond differently to the biblical ideals of God depending on their relationship to God.

## **2. The Government Leaders are Established for a Divine Purpose.**

Government leaders are established for the divine purpose of administering justice. They do this in the following ways:

**First**, they are to be the servant of God (Rom. 13:4,5). The apostle uses two words to describe this purpose. He describes them as "servants" or "deacons" (διακονος or *diakonos*) of God for the good and well being of the people. Again the government is to be God's λειτουργοι (*leitourgoi*). This is a compound word of λειτος (*leitos*) meaning "public" and εργον (*ergon*) meaning

"work". Literally it means "public worker". It is a rare word in the *koine* Greek. Originally it was used in reference to the liturgical officials.

The term is used five times in the New Testament. It is used in reference to angels as the agents of God's will (Heb. 1:7) and Christ's high priestly ministry performed in the true heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:2). Paul uses the term to describe himself as the minister of God to the gentiles (Rom. 15:16). In this context the term may mean "ministers," "servants" or "agents" of God. The most important thing to note about the term, however, is the recipient of the service.

Strathman observes that, "It is not the word *λειτουργος* (*leitourgos*) [in Rom. 13:6 and Heb. 1:7] which gives the expression its strong religious colouring but the fact that God or Christ is the recipient of the service. (Strathman 1967: 231). So government leaders are to be ministers unto the service of God.

**Secondly**, they are to give "praise," "reward," "recommendation" (*επαινον* or *epainos*) to those who practice good (Rom. 13:3).

**Thirdly**, they are to be an "avenger" (*εκδικος* or *ekdikos*) of evil doers. This is a compound word of *εκ* (*ek*) meaning "out of," and *δικει* (*dikei*), meaning "justice," "to punish the evil." It must be noted that in reality an evil government tends to punish the good and commend the evil. So Christians are not to allow their disputes to be judged by the non-Christian government (1 Cor. 6:1ff).

**Fourthly**, they are to lead and protect God's people (Isa. 49:23; 60:10). The rulers are referred to as the captains of God's people (1 Sam. 10:1, 2 Kings 20:5), "shields of the earth" (Ps. 47:9) and "public shepherds." (Ps. 78:70-71).

Hence, God ordained the government for the benefit of the people (2 Sam. 5:12). It is to maintain justice in two ways:

a) God wants the government leaders to use their God-given authority and power to set and maintain standards of right and wrong.

b) God wants the state to protect and defend those who obey the law and do what is right and to punish the disobedient. When the government becomes a means of corruption and fraud, it is explicitly not functioning in God's will.

### **3. The Worldly Rulers Must be Admonished to Serve the Lord Lest They Face His Judgement.**

Divine judgement is inevitable for heathen rulers who rule in rebellion (Ps. 2:1-12).

#### **4. There are Notable Reasons Why Civil Government Leaders are Prone to Evil.**

**a) Government deals with laws.** All law is religious. It is meant to determine the value of right and wrong. There is nothing like non-religious law. If the government judiciary rejects the Bible it will come up with pagan laws. For this reason Weaver believes, "The government is a theological issue" (Weaver 1991: 8) and so whoever determines ones laws is ones "God".

**b) Government naturally tends to perpetuate itself.** King Jeroboam introduced idolatry into the land because he was afraid that if people worshipped in Jerusalem they would return to King Rehoboam and he would lose power and be executed (I Kg. 12:1ff). Similarly, the government leaders in Christ's time were willing to crucify Jesus in order to maintain their power and position (Jn. 11:47-48).

**c) Government is force and power.** The fallen and corrupt man desires to manipulate and exercise dominion over people rather than the earth. All must either submit or suffer.

### **PROPOSAL THREE**

*The Church must teach, preach and write on what the Bible teaches about the ones led if they are to understand God's expectations of them and hence play their part in their relationship with the leaders. We will now consider the Biblical teaching about the ones led.*

#### **1. All People are Commanded to Subject Themselves to the Obedience of the Government Authorities.**

The people are to "be subject to," "obedient to" and "submissive to," (*ὑποτασσεσθω* or *hypotassestho*) the governing authorities. The word is a present imperative and hence a command to be practiced continually.

Such an obedience to the government ensures peace and security to the people (v36). It brings about a clear conscience. One will not live with a guilty conscience. On the other hand, resistance to the government for no apparent reason is resistance to the ordinance of God (vv 1-2). Such resistance awaits sure judgement from God (v2).

We agree with Weaver that this obedience is conditional. It is conditional upon the authorities functioning under the jurisdiction of God. Otherwise, "When any authority transgresses and leaves its lawful sphere of authority it loses its jurisdiction and authority" (Weaver 1991:10).

The actual referent of the word, "authorities" (εξουσιαις or *exousiais*) (Rom. 13) has excited heated debate among New Testament scholars. The word may mean "state" or "invisible angelic powers". Cullmann has written a long excursus on it to prove the second meaning. But it seems that he is influenced by his presupposition that civil government is not a "final institution". Cranfield and Morrison are right to argue that Paul has the "state" in mind in this particular text. The immediate context refers to them as "rulers" (v3) and speaks of the need to pay taxes to them (v7).

## **2. Obedience to the Government Requires Certain Duties from the People.**

**First**, the people are to pay the required tax (Rom. 13:6-7). Jesus directs that, that which belongs to Caesar must be submitted to him (Mk. 12:1). **Second**, we need to give our government leaders their due respect and honour (Rom. 13:7 cf Pt. 2:12).

**Secondly**, there is the burning issue in relation to this section which needs our attention and address. This is the question whether the Scripture makes provision for certain cases in which Christians may disobey the governing authorities. We will observe a biblical view on this issue and make a proposal on what to do in situations where the government is against the moral teaching of Christianity.

a) The Christian is to obey the government in accordance with the Scriptures. The nature of biblical government is covenantal.

i) It is a covenant between the ruler and God. The ruler agrees to rule according to the standards of God and God makes his promises (Deut. 28:1ff).

ii) It is also a covenant between the ruler and the people. The ruler commits himself to rule justly and faithfully, and the people to obey the ruler as he obeys God (Jos. 24:1; 2 Chr. 23:2-3; 2 Sam. 5:3; Eccl. 8:2).

iii) Also it is a covenant between the people and God. They agreed to obey the ruler as unto God (1 Sam. 12:24ff). We find that, "In biblical covenants, when one party violates or breaks the covenant, the other party is loosed from obedience to the covenant" (Weaver 1991:46).

We can draw a principle for today's Christian from the foregoing. If any government demands violation of the Scripture, the Christian is under no obligation to obey whatsoever.

b) We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). As citizens of a nation we are required to obey the government as long as doing so is not in conflict with the Scriptures. When the state demands what belongs to God, such as totalitarian states often do, like the demanding of worship of the king, the

Christian is not to obey. Men of God refused to worship the king and opted to face severe consequences. Shadrack and friends were thrown into the burning furnace (Dan. 6:1ff). Daniel was thrown in the lions den (Dan. 6:1ff). The early church was persecuted for the same reason of saying "no" to the worship of the king (emperor). In the Roman government one could worship his god so long as he worshipped Caesar through an offering or proclaiming that Caesar was god and lord. Resistance to this decree was treated as treason. But for Christians it was idolatry. For Christians, treason is nothing essentially done against any human leader but any form of unfaithfulness to God. This calls for a maintenance of a critical attitude towards the state.

There are many more cases in the Bible where God's people disobeyed the state. Israel sought for freedom from the hand of Pharaoh (state) and disobeyed the order to pursue God's will (Exodus 1:15-21). The one-hundred prophets were protected by Obadiah against Jezebel's (state's) order to be killed (I Kg. 18:1-4). Jeremiah and Baruch rewrote, preserved and circulated the Word of God in disobedience to king Jehoiakim who burned the scrolls and arrested Jeremiah. When the Sanhedrin (high court) prohibited the disciples from telling the people about Jesus, they refused (Acts 4:17-19; 5:28).

Before the return of Christ, when the state (anti-Christ) will require all to receive the mark, and hence worship the antichrist, true believers will refuse (Rev. 13:13-18).

If a Christian finds that the state requires him to do what is morally wrong, then the same should seek to make a wise appeal. The following steps are based on the actions of Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1:3-21; 3:16-27 and 6:1-25.

First, the Christians should make sure that he is serving under the government authority in an attitude of submission, honour and respect. Next, Christians should calmly find out the reason for the state's action. Then, the Christian should humbly appeal to the state authority and propose an alternative to the state's action. If possible, the proposed alternative should help the ruler reach his objectives, without violating any of Gods moral laws or principles. The Christians should point out the benefits of the alternative - how it will help the state. Finally, if the state official refuses the appeal, Christians should calmly state their conviction of what God requires, that they must obey God and that they are willing to suffer the consequences for doing what God wants them to do.



## PROPOSAL FOUR

*The church has a specific duty to the evil political leaders in the African countries.*

In a case where the government is explicitly or allegedly evil, punishing good and rewarding evil, we wish to make the following proposals:

### **1. Do Thorough Investigation.**

The aim is to establish solid facts about the accusation. The church must not just act upon newspaper reports. Some tend to be biased and misleading.

### **2. Issue a Biblical Statement on the Matter.**

This is to be done in writing. The aim is to issue a warning to the leaders and the people of the impending and inevitable judgement of God. It will also help to show the position of the church on the issue to avoid neutrality.

### **3. Make Suggestions of What Must be Done.**

This is to be included in the statement. The proposal should not violate other biblical principles of Christian life. The aim is to arrive at a practical solution, using peaceful rather than violent means. The end should not justify the means, which is a wrong Marxist ideology.

The issue which confronts the church is this: By what means of communication will their proposals reach the affected leaders? The best mode is that which works in a given situation. Some practical options include, first: a group of church leaders going to visit the president of the nation and discuss the proposals; second: a private letter sent directly to the president with details of the proposals; third: through newspaper media; fourth: to preach it in church and allow newspaper men to report in the media.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to draw the following conclusions in regard to the role of church in Africa's political development:

1. The primary role of the church is not to bring about socio-political and economic liberation in Africa.
2. The church must provide a biblical definition for such easily misunderstood terms as "peace," "liberation" and other similar words.
3. In addressing any socio-political and economic issues in Africa, the church must draw its message from the Bible, using the hermeneutical procedure

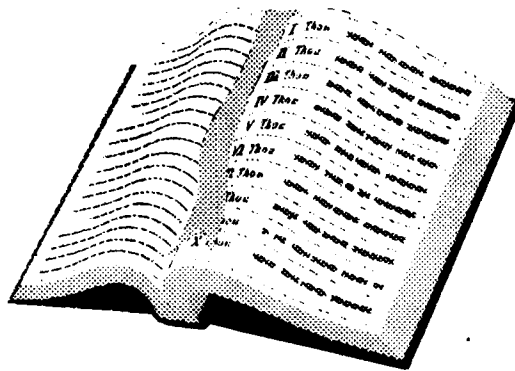
which is the norm among evangelicals, namely, the Historico-Grammatical approach.

4. The evangelical church must actively and deliberately fight against the ever increasing influence of liberal theology, in particular, "Liberation Theology", which has continued to pose a dangerous threat to Christianity in Africa.
5. The Church of Christ must neither be sidetracked nor shrink from its God-given role in the society, namely, to be "the voice of God on earth."
6. The Church of Christ will play this divine and sacred role in Africa's political development by preaching, teaching and writing about the biblical instructions to the political leaders and the ones led.

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# THE CASE FOR A "CASE-STUDY" APPROACH TO THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA

**ERNST R. WENDLAND**

*This paper surveys a potentially helpful method of theological education called the "case-study" approach. The overview briefly describes this technique, notes some analogous indigenous African and biblical forms, presents its definite advantages as an inductive teaching tool, and points out a number of limitations in its practice. The conclusion is that while the case-study method has a lot to offer theological educators in Africa, it should not be employed on its own, but rather as part of a larger, integrated programme of instruction, whether formal or informal.*

## INTRODUCTION

"I know a procedure that will surely help you to become a more effective teacher and the students whom you instruct to become more efficient learners." Now that is a rather bold claim to make, and one which no doubt requires a certain amount of practical evidence in order to convince you that it is true. This is the aim of the present study. But hopefully the opening statement has at least aroused your interest or curiosity to the point that you are willing to read on and consider the "case" that is made for adopting, to a greater or lesser degree, a particular method that has proven itself as an effective teaching approach in many different parts of the world, in both formal (institutional) as well as informal

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(TEE) settings. I am confident that this introductory consideration of "case-study" methodology, if you are not familiar with it already, will reveal the potential that it has to accomplish just exactly what has been promised, namely, to improve your own teaching capabilities as well as the learning capacities of your students, on whatever level this may be within the wider context of theological education in Africa.

First, a little background information may be necessary to help create a framework within which we might profitably consider this subject. I will therefore begin with a summary of the main principles and procedures of this interactive method of instruction, popularly referred to as the "case-study" approach. This particular system or technique of teaching and learning started to be formally applied to the field of Christian theological education in the 1970s, but much earlier in the century it was already being extensively employed in other secular academic disciplines, such as law, business management, medicine, and various physical sciences. It is important to recognize, however, that the process concerned is based essentially upon "induction," a didactic method which goes back much further in the history of man's intellectual development, probably to the beginning of time. It is also a mode of instruction which has special relevance to Africa, whose many peoples have incorporated the case-study approach with a high degree of artistic creativity as part of their ancient and diverse traditions of oral literature, which are still widely practiced in most areas of the sub-continent even today.

Although it promises to add a valuable new component to the overall process of theological training, the case-study technique, as commonly presented, does entail several potentially serious limitations which must be clearly recognised and thoroughly evaluated. These problems are of such a nature that they would automatically preclude the use of case instruction as the sole method of such religious education and might possibly cause a certain degree of misunderstanding that could prevent its being utilized more widely as a pedagogical tool. The approach needs to be carefully examined, therefore, with respect to both its presuppositions and its objectives in addition to the basic methodology whereby it is practiced. A critical appraisal of this kind may be best effected by actually working through a sample illustration of its mode of operation. But due to the lack of space, it has not been possible to include such an example here.<sup>1</sup>

### **WHAT IS A "CASE STUDY" AND HOW DOES IT WORK?**

In short, a religious case-study is a true story (or one that is based on or adapted from a true account) which presents a human problem that does not have an obvious conclusion or a definite answer. It is a "slice-of-life" portrayal

that focuses upon a specific issue with respect to which one or more of the participants in the case are required to make a significant choice or decision. This is one which makes a difference in their lives in that it affects their basic beliefs and/or behaviour as determined by their fundamental world-view. Where Christian characters are concerned, it is important to observe and evaluate the extent to which this crucial response is guided by biblical principles and values as they are held and practiced by the person(s) involved.

The typical case-study, however, does not actually reveal the decision that was taken or the solution discovered. Rather, the account serves to concisely introduce the central problem; it dramatizes the surrounding circumstances through the words, actions, and feelings of the participants as recorded from the perspective of a "central character" or an impersonal "narrator"; and finally it brings the situation up to a point where a decision has to be made. Normally several valid alternatives present themselves at this juncture, but none of these appear to be completely "correct" or satisfactory. In other words, each option has some good and bad points connected with it, and so there is considerable room for debate over which would, in fact, be the most appropriate choice in keeping with Scriptural principles. Thus a case-study is somewhat like a mystery or a detective story minus the ending: We have a situation of tense human conflict, whether that be individual or communal in orientation, physical or psychological in focus, and pertaining to the past, present, or future. The events associated with this set of circumstances lead up to a critical decision that must be reached, based upon the various pieces of evidence and "clues" which have been given, as perceived by the central participant or narrator. What remains then is the judgment itself or the choice of what to do and the reasons for it.

And here is where the listeners set aside their passive role as observers and actually begin to "enter" the case themselves, at least mentally. It is up to them now to personally face up to the dilemma which the characters in the story confront. Either each person individually or the group as a whole in dialogue must make that critical decision, one that may significantly change or alter the course of the case-character's thinking and/or behavior. This will involve a careful consideration of all the factual details of the situation, the motivations and attitudes of the participants, the available options and their respective consequences, plus any other biblically-related factors which may enter into the decision-making process. Then, having chosen a particular alternative or course of action, each outside "interactant" should be prepared to defend it by means of a clear presentation of the evidence which supports his (her) opinion and/or which detracts from the other possibilities. This would include an indication of the expected results of the solution which s/he has proposed and why this seems to be the best thing that can be done under the current circumstances.

A "classic" instance of a case-study goes like this:

There were two men who lived in the same town;  
one was rich  
and the other poor.  
The rich man had many cattle and sheep,  
while the poor man had only one lamb,  
which he had bought.  
He took care of it,  
and it grew up in his home with his  
children.  
He would feed it some of his own food,  
let it drink from his cup, and hold it in his  
lap.  
The lamb was like a daughter to him.

One day a visitor arrived at the rich man's home.  
The rich man didn't want to kill one of his own animals to fix a  
meal for him;  
instead, he took the poor man's lamb  
and prepared a meal for his guest.  
(2 Sam.12:1-4, NIV)

We are all quite familiar with King David's indignant response. He was completely caught up emotionally with the events of Nathan's parable (case-study) and reacted as naturally if he were right there on the scene. There was no way then that he could later extricate himself from his own word of condemnation when the prophet brought him face to face with reality in the shocking revelation: "You are that man!"

Now it is true, Nathan's story is not exactly the same as the case-study as it was earlier described. For one thing, though it is based on a real-life event, the case is initially disguised by being cast in the form of a parable. Furthermore, the decision to be made in this situation was the responsibility of an implicit participant in the account, namely, the king of Israel, to whom such a seeming act of injustice would presumably have been taken for judgment. But since Nathan was actually addressing the king, this variation is understandable. And finally, it is not evident from the original setting as narrated whether a certain ambiguity was in fact present in the case, a mitigating circumstance which would have rendered it not quite so clear-cut. For example, some commentators have suggested that technically the rich overlord did have a legal right to the property of one of his tenant farmers (if the poor man were such), especially if the latter were in debt to him.

Nevertheless, certain prominent aspects of the case-method in operation are clearly present. The total psychological involvement and self-identification of the hearer is obvious. The purpose of the story to elicit a definite commitment in the form of an explicit personal reaction is also well illustrated. And certainly the decision that was so forcefully arrived at was of considerable significance to all of the participants concerned, both the characters within the parable as well as those who were listening to it. David's self-judgement fell not only upon himself, but it initiated some serious consequences for his entire family, including his future descendants, as well as the whole nation of Israel (2 Sam. 12:10-12).

### **CASE-STUDIES, LOGICAL INDUCTION, AND AFRICAN ORAL TRADITION**

The relationship between the case-study approach to learning and the so-called "inductive" method of reasoning is not difficult to discern. The former is simply a sub-type of the latter. Induction typically proceeds from the analysis of a set of specific facts which are life-related and culture-specific to a general conclusion that is based on those facts and which, in turn, may be applied to a large number of similar situations. It works from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from individual instances to an inclusive category, from a problem to its solution. The inductive process focuses upon concrete personal examples, analogies, anecdotes, contrasts, images, figures, details--evidence which tends to appeal to one's feelings and senses, his imagination and personal experience. The objective is to develop on this familiar foundation either a natural conclusion (based on the indigenous "logic" of the society concerned), a generalised principle of thought or behaviour, or a directive for action (e.g., exhortation, admonition, warning, prohibition, etc.). For this reason, particularly in literary contexts, learning-teaching by induction is often set within a narrative framework, one which manifests a great deal of participant interaction in the form of dialogue, as diverse positions and possibilities are progressively explored and evaluated.

The inductive method is thus strongly receptor- and experience-oriented, and this is one of the primary reasons for both its appeal and its effectiveness as a learning device. It begins where people are at – their understanding, assumptions, point of view, needs, wants, values, goals, opinions, fears, deficiencies, abilities – and works up from there in order to promote a deeper level of understanding with regard to some significant human problem or crisis, hence embodying a greater potential for personal improvement. The typically dialogic procedure strongly encourages audience interaction (verbal, at times even physical) and involvement (emotive and volitional as well as cognitive) along the way. This takes place as the diverse facts being considered are sorted



out, categorised, and organised so as to derive an agreeable and satisfying conclusion or consensus at the end. The latter may then be applied in a practical way toward solving one of life's mysteries, difficulties, or deficiencies--particularly as this concerns one's deeply-held religious beliefs and practices. Such problem-solving activity has, to a certain significant degree, to be carried out by each participant by him/herself or the impact of the exercise is diminished and its benefits correspondingly reduced. In an African context (as opposed to a Western one), however, it may be more natural for the individual to effectively learn by active participation within a group dialogue setting.

Certainly learning by induction is no stranger to Africa or to many other predominantly oral-aural societies in the world. Despite the rapid progress being made in technological development, economic diversification, political pluralism, and literacy-based education, an ancient system of communication known as "oral tradition" still plays a prominent role in popular African social culture, in both urban and rural settings. This traditional mode of message transmission – or dramatisation – generally encompasses a broad range of predominantly artistic-didactic genres, such as, proverbs, riddles, myths, legends, historical records, folk tales, praise poems, songs of all sorts as well as those verbal forms that are primarily utilitarian in function, for example, prayers, formulae of divination, magical incantations, curses, initiation instructions, and official pronouncements at social and religious ceremonies."

Although each of these popular forms of verbal discourse are quite distinct, they all tend to have several noteworthy inductive features in common. One is that they are firmly rooted in human experience (including a people's ethnic history, or "tradition") as well as the ecological and environmental features that characterise the physical surroundings of the society concerned. The content of such literature is thus quite familiar to the masses to begin with. It is easier then for them to identify with the participants and situations that are presented and hence also to meaningfully relate to the specific problem or need that is being addressed.

Secondly, these literary types are highly participatory in presentation. In other words, the audience either has a formal role to play in their performance (e.g., a riddle, responsive narrative, or song chorus), or they are encouraged to make an informal spontaneous verbal contribution to the proceedings (e.g., at an initiation ceremony or a judicial debate). This helps to ensure that most, if not all, listeners become themselves personally involved both physically and mentally with the composition of the message, whether old or new, which consequently makes a greater and more lasting impression upon them.

And finally, the forms of oral tradition are clearly functional in nature, that is, they are motivated by and intended to accomplish certain communicative objectives in the particular socio-cultural setting in which they are performed. Among such functions, the didactic element is perhaps the most important since it appears to be manifested to a greater or lesser degree on just about every occasion. Participants either learn for the first time (if they are younger) or they reinforce in their own thinking and habits some of the chief moral and ethical tenets of their society through the means of their oral lore. Yet by virtue of the equally prominent aesthetic and social dimension of such literature, this instructional component is subdued, downplayed, and frequently even completely disguised. Participants, whether young or old, are enculturated into the key beliefs, mores, customs, and behavioural standards, of the group even as they are fully engaged in an enjoyable communal endeavour. Education is not perceived, therefore, as being an activity that is somehow esoteric, restrictive, oppressive, unproductive, tiring, or just plain boring – not if one can have fun while one is doing it!

Most African oral traditions do, in fact, boast of a particular literary genre which is similar in many respects to the case-study as outlined above. This is the so-called "dilemma tale," which deals with a specific problem in life, especially with regard to interpersonal relationships, for which there is no apparent or easy solution. After the tale has been told, it is up to the audience to debate it, seeking a way out of the difficulty that will not only uphold the traditional value system and way of life, but will also work out the best for all those concerned, not necessarily as individuals, but as members of a tightly-knit social community. The following is an example selected from the Ila corpus as recorded earlier this century by Smith and Dale.<sup>33</sup>

A man and his wife went to visit their friends. On their return homewards they were accompanied by their respective mothers. On the road, the four were set upon by all manner of horrible creatures – lions, snakes, leopards, etc. etc. They managed to elude them and got to a river. There they found a canoe, but to their horror it would only hold three people. Their enemies were pressing hard upon their trail. The river was full of crocodiles; they couldn't hope to swim. Only three could escape. One must die! Who was it to be?

The man sacrificed his mother-in-law, you say. No! His wife would not allow him. She would not desert her mother, nor he his; the elders would not forsake their children. How did they get out of this difficulty?

The preferred "native answer," according to Smith and Dale, is that all four persons sacrificed themselves by sitting down on the riverbank to die together. If it is true that this is the solution which would finally be agreed upon

in practice, it would probably be due to the authority of the narrative tradition backing this conventional conclusion. This outcome, however, would undoubtedly be opposed, especially nowadays, in the preceding communal debate, whether seriously or just for the sake of argument, by a variety of strongly supported and closely argued counter-proposals.

## **THE TEACHER AS PARTICIPANT IN CASE-STUDY TECHNIQUE**

Most of us would probably agree that the case-method is, potentially at least, a valuable pedagogical tool, for it serves to more fully engage the student psychologically in his/her own learning experience, and this makes the point of the lesson both easier to retain in one's memory and more likely to be actually applied in life. A well-composed (whether orally or in writing) and publicly presented case study kindles a listener's creativity and interest, arouses latent analytical skills, promotes a deep level of theological thinking and spiritual awareness, leads a person to the Scriptures for possible analogies and answers, encourages a co-operative or participatory approach to problem-solving in the church, and fosters a critical searching and evaluation of one's own religious assumptions for any hidden self-centredness or ethnocentric bias. But what about the teacher – where and how does s/he fit into this essential educational process?

The proponents of the case-study approach are quite definite on this point: The instructor has an indispensable role to play in the whole learning event. Furthermore, the method serves to help one develop and improve one's teaching skills. This is because the teacher him/herself becomes engaged in the process of learning, not only with respect to the case being presented, but also in relation to all those who are participating in its discussion. In short, the instructor becomes a student too--but a special sort of one--rather than acting as the privileged oracle of wisdom, a sole dispenser of knowledge, an authoritative shaper of public opinion, or the infallible judge of right and wrong. In his/her capacity as discussion leader, the "moderator" of the case (avoiding now the term "teacher") carries out a number of key functions which contribute greatly to the success (or failure) of this communal learning experience. These may be summarised in terms of three major activities, which are closely related to one another in practice:

**1) Stimulate Interaction** – Ideally, once a case has been presented, it should largely "run on its own" so to speak through the various reactions and suggestions by the participants.

The moderator should fade into the background, as it were, to allow the others to develop their ideas, argue their points, and state their opinions. Of

course, this does not always happen, and people may be reluctant to express their own views on the case at hand, especially at first. Therefore, it is up to the moderator to keep things moving by asking provocative questions, calling for a restatement/clarification, and by initiating other activities designed to promote the personal involvement of everyone there, e.g., set up a mini-drama, i.e., to "role-play" the characters of the case; call for a vote on a particular issue; assign the writing (or utterance) of a formal "opinion" or "response" on the case; organise a team-debate over opposing positions; carefully record and organise individual contributions or group decisions on a chalkboard; and so forth.

**2) Guide the Discussion** – There are times, of course, when the moderator may have to assume a more active presiding role during the deliberation of a case in order to preserve order and an atmosphere that is conducive to the free expression of one's ideas – no matter how controversial these may be, as long as they are directly related to the subject at hand. In other words, s/he may occasionally have to act as a "referee" so that a healthy difference of opinion does not degenerate into personal quarrelling or a lively conversation become monopolised by just a few outspoken individuals. Conflict and opposition, though inevitable, even necessary, in a meaningful debate, should never be allowed to becloud matters emotionally or divert the discussion off course and on to peripheral issues, which while interesting in themselves, do not really contribute to a resolution of the principal problem under consideration. While it is always important to keep the exchange of ideas on track, at times it may be necessary for the moderator to highlight certain alternatives which have not yet been taken up in order to get participants to creatively investigate some new lines of thinking. Specific "time-limits" may also have to be set (or better: mutually agreed upon) so that a variety of points and perspectives may be examined within the period available.

**3) Provide Pertinent "Commentary"** – In a role which overlaps considerably with the two preceding ones, a moderator must be prepared to serve as a "commentator" on the debate which s/he has initiated through his/her case study. This involves breaking in to the discussion at periodic intervals, at some convenient pause-point, in order to supply a summary of the proceedings thus far or a survey of the conclusions already reached by the group. This sort of topical round-up would be especially useful, of course, at the end of the meeting. In addition, it may be necessary for the moderator to provide certain relevant background information pertaining to the case at hand, that is, concerning the people, places, events, situations, and circumstances which surround the events being considered. At times this may be of a technical nature, such as the clinical aspects of AIDS detection and treatment, the psychological characteristics of depression, or the political implications of famine-relief projects. The vital culture-specific significance of a particular traditional rite or ceremony will need

to be clarified for ethnic "outsiders." It may also be helpful to introduce references to analogous cases for comparative study and evaluation. Depending on the theological background of participants, some supplementary information relating to the teachings and case-studies found in the Scriptures may have to be provided by the moderator for the group's consideration.

## **TWO MODEL "CASE"-TEACHERS**

An excellent model of a skilled, down-to-earth religious instructor is Jesus Christ himself. Not only did he depend upon a specific type of case-study, the parable, as his preferred mode of instruction (Mk.4:33), but he also illustrated how these literary forms might be effectively utilised, on several conceptual levels, to get one's various theological and ethical points across.<sup>iv</sup> The parable, as a very basic mode of didactic communication, was one well-suited for reaching the untutored masses who could so easily be misled. These real-life accounts (though probably not historically true) explained and demonstrated in most practical, down-to-earth terms certain crucial features about the "Kingdom of God" which he had come to establish and to exemplify. There were a lot of erroneous notions circulating about the promised Messiah in those turbulent days of Roman rule, crass nationalistic ideas which were often based upon a materialistic and/or literalistic interpretation of some passage from the Mosaic law or the prophets. Our Saviour's first task then was to start (even shock) people thinking along different, more spiritual lines – to enable them to "unlearn" as it were what they had been taught by the traditional religious establishment and to focus on what the will of God really was for their lives. He usually did this by embedding within his parables some event or element that was controversial or which contradicted conventional "wisdom" and contemporary "dogma" on the particular topic at issue (e.g., how the people of God were to relate in a "neighbourly" way to ethnic outsiders).

For his "students," the disciples, Jesus could take this inductive learning process a step, and sometimes two, further in its degree of detail. Often in response to their own questions about a given parable, Christ would present an interpretation and application of the "case" which it illustrated. Many, perhaps even most, of these were based upon a straightforward analogy or comparison between an incident from ordinary life and the relationship that God wanted to establish with his people, such as the so-called "Parable of the Sower," found in Mark 4 (cf. Matt. 13 and Luke 8). Other parables, however, were more provocative and closely approximated the modern case-study in calling for a definite decision on the part of his addressee(s). A good example of this is the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" in Luke 10. Although the answer that Christ wanted was obvious enough (Luke 10:36), it was not one that was easy for a community leader, especially an "expert in the law," to verbalise, given the great

socio-religious gulf that existed between Jews and Samaritans. Nevertheless, the man was pushed to admit that the Samaritan was indeed the "neighbour" of the waylaid Jewish traveller, and he was thus confronted with the typical parable-concluding practical implication or imperative, in this case: "Go and do likewise!" (v.37).

The Apostle Paul also exemplifies a number of literary variations of the case-study technique in his letters. This is naturally much more difficult to accomplish by means of written communication, for the moderator is not able to personally interact with his respondents. Thus, the main point of the discussion or argument tends to be much more focused in the direction of one particular response. Nevertheless, the minds of the addressees are definitely caught up in a serious ethical or moral issue, which they are then forced to wrestle with and resolve in their own minds. We see this illustrated in Paul's handling of the problem of eating idol meat and giving "offence" as it concerned the Corinthian congregation.

He first outlines the central teaching on the relationship between God, idols, and fellow Christians in chapter 8 of his first letter, taking care to draw attention to the implications for "strong" believers on the matter of whether or not to eat "idol meat" in the presence of a "weaker" brother (e.g., 8:10-12). The whole of chapter 9 is then taken up with a personal case-study, as it were, based upon the Apostle's own practice of sacrificing his rights (i.e., of receiving congregational support) for the sake of others in order to serve the Gospel cause. Next, the grave spiritual (and physical!) danger of actually participating in pagan religious worship is highlighted by several graphic examples of ancient Israel in the wilderness (10:1-13) and also by contemporary Christians as they celebrate the Lord's Supper (10:14-22). Finally, Paul puts the reader/hearer himself into his own case-study as he sketches several scenarios where a decision on whether or not to exercise his Christian freedom will have to be made in line with the twofold criterion of doing everything to the glory of God and yet nothing that will cause a brother (or sister) to fall in his (her) faith (10:23-33). Notice that at the very end of his discourse on this subject (11:1), Paul points out the importance of having good, biblically-led "role-models" to follow in the oftentimes difficult matter of deciding what to do in a specific ethical situation ("case") in life.

### **WHAT IS NEW ABOUT CASE-STUDIES?**

At this point someone might be tempted to conclude that the case-study method is nothing new at all. Good Christian educators have been following the approach for centuries, certainly in more recent times in the religious discipline that is sometimes termed "practical" (moral) theology. As was pointed out earlier,

it is quite true to say that case-studies in the generic sense of human examples, analogies, and life-histories have always been utilised for illustration as a prominent component of the inductive method of teaching/learning. The difference is that nowadays the term is being used in a much more limited sense and put into practice as part of a rather specific educative strategy.

We might summarise the main features which distinguish these modern "cases" as follows: They are – condensed or adapted from an actual historical record, but have a definite spiritual relevance for many analogous situations in the present day; they are deliberately composed in order to focus upon a particular crisis or turning point in life; they are selected in part on account of their ambiguity or lack of an immediately apparent solution (though the Scriptures will of course speak to the various issues involved); and they are intended to elicit a concrete decision on the part of receptors, one which each participant must be prepared to publicly defend on the basis of God's Word.

Furthermore, we also saw that the case-study method involves a rather specific mode or technique of instruction in order for it to be successfully effected. The teacher himself becomes a learner, for he finds himself in a situation where he does not have all the answers (or at least undebatable ones), and in some instances he may not even know where to look. In his role as a "moderator" of the proceedings, he discovers himself being continually enriched by the ideas and insights of his "panel of correspondents" or student commentators. His job is to keep the discussion focused and running along smoothly, but also honestly addressing all aspects of the chief moral questions or theological issue(s) which the case has uncovered. He may assist here and there with a summary, conclusion, or bit of background information as needed, but in the main he is there simply to "direct traffic" in what is intended to be a communal, fully participatory, mutually engaging, and spiritually beneficial learning experience.

### **SOME LIMITATIONS OF THE CASE-METHOD APPROACH**

Doing theology by means of cases and the ensuing participant discussion, whether oral or written (i.e., "briefs"), was never intended to be an exclusive, independent approach to the discipline. Rather, it has been correctly promoted and employed as a supplementary instrument of learning – designed to engage, integrate, illustrate, and apply the four principal fields of biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology within the context of various problematic issues and situations which confront one in a contemporary setting. For this reason, the case-technique needs to be closely, yet also deliberately, incorporated as part of a total theological formal (e.g., seminary) or informal (TEE) course of study to augment the other, more traditional methods of

teaching. Yet it should not be viewed as something quite peripheral either, as an exercise reserved for the last class period in the week or quickly (and haphazardly) introduced on a hot summer afternoon when most students are having great difficulty in staying awake!

Thus supplementary does not mean subordinate, for as a didactic exercise, the case-study method is hard to surpass in effectiveness for achieving its objectives. However, it works best (in an African setting) when utilised in conjunction with other didactic modes and means of communication as part of a larger "inductive" emphasis within the curriculum,<sup>v</sup> one that favours, for example: oral (or written) instruction by the dialogic, question-answer + examples method, rather than by concentrated lectures (no matter how "logically" or "systematically" these may be organised); periodic joint, as opposed to individual, homework/research assignments and class presentations; frequent sessions involving interdisciplinary "team"-teaching (for expatriates, definitely with a national co-worker); instruction (if possible) in a common vernacular language to encourage and check up on the correct transmission of key theological terms, concepts, and applications; participation in some form of Bible translation work (e.g., a review for accuracy); and frequent oral-visual evaluation (by cassette tape or video) of student performance in sermon delivery, teaching style, evangelistic witness, and various pastoral acts (e.g., visiting the sick).

The big problem is that case-teaching is not usually very efficient as far as one's use of the resource of time is concerned, which is a serious limiting factor that is rather difficult to overcome in today's crowded curricula or in the periodic visitations that characterise a TEE programme. What gets communicated by this method is generally there to stay, but it takes a considerable amount of deliberative discussion to reach that stage, i.e., to fully explore a situation to the point where students begin to personally benefit from the learning experience (not a "lesson" per se). A related shortcoming is that appropriate and factually based case-studies cannot always be found to teach, or illustrate, the full range of subjects that need to be covered in a given syllabus. In addition to scope, another difficulty is depth: cases cannot – and should not be forced to – develop a particular theological topic to the degree of detail that may be desired in a comprehensive treatment of the subject. It is clearly much more effective when used as a tool in the instruction of matters pertaining to ethical, or applied, theology.

Now the preceding are all fairly obvious limitations, though one might object to it being somewhat too pessimistic an appraisal. Be that as it may, since the case-study approach relates primarily to the method of instruction rather than to the content of what is intended to be taught, it may be more profitable to zero in on that particular aspect of the issue: how does the use of cases rate as



a pedagogical procedure in the field of theological education as a whole? Here is where we find a rather serious deficiency in delineation, one which needs to be amended in order to avoid both a misunderstanding and a misapplication of the technique.

This problem essentially concerns the matter of priorities. One normally finds in most published presentation of the case-study method some potentially misleading statements regarding its nature and objectives.<sup>vi</sup> These tend to imply, whether rightly or wrongly, a certain relativistic bias or perspective that seems to permeate its practical operation and application. Such a position or approach would in turn tend to cast doubt upon the primary relevance, perspicuity, sufficiency, and authority of the Holy Scriptures, and this, for most "evangelical" theologians, is in itself a serious, self-incriminating "case" as far as usage is concerned.

There is, for example, an over-emphasis on the search for real-life situations in which "no clear right or wrong answer appears," as if such ambiguity were being established as the principal characteristic, or *sine qua non*, of the "genuine" case-study. One is thus called upon to consider "clues which, evaluated by the students' criteria and values, pose various 'solutions' or alternative types of response." Such an analytical procedure of course depends upon the specific objective means whereby one seeks to come to a resolution or decision in the matter. And here we notice the conspicuous lack of any explicitly formulated set of biblical criteria that would enable one to "weigh the evidence," that is, to assign a priority rating to some factors over against others which may be equally prominent in the circumstances described. One is merely encouraged to discover "the decision which is most creative and responsible" with the caution being that this "is often not clear cut or obvious."

In short, the Scriptures do not appear to assume a position of pre-eminence in the decision-making process, either qualitatively (i.e., with respect to its divine authority) or quantitatively (i.e., as the primary source of guidance). Instead, it is demoted, whether by intention or effect, to one among several possible (and presumably equal) "resources of grace" which the investigator has the freedom to tap in order to cope with the theological and moral complexities that are inherent in a given situation. Thus it is no surprise that frequently "different recommendations" emerge because the commentator is drawing upon differing choices or judgements among "the traditional sources of theology such as the Bible, revelation [seemingly extra-biblical], tradition [i.e., ecclesiastical], or [human] reason" [my comments added]. In fact, one is warned against establishing any sort of evaluatory guidelines in the educative operation since "clear criteria and the relative degree of authority cannot be assigned in advance; rather, these become factors in theological reflection."

One could not be faulted, therefore, were s/he to come to the conclusion that we are engaging here in the liberal, relativistic practice of theology which has sometimes been popularly termed "situation ethics." In other words, the conclusion that someone reaches with regard to a particular case is very much an individual or personal matter. Thus it will usually depend more on the associated contextual circumstances and what is "best" (physically, psychologically, socially, morally, spiritually – all rated more or less equally) for the human participants involved, rather than upon any objective and predetermined standards or norms of belief and/or behaviour. And the paramount factor guiding the operation appears to be nothing more or less than the analyst's own idiosyncratic judgement in the case, for "the appropriate or best decision will be one that is consistent with your own beliefs...and values." But that would be a pretty heavy load to carry, for how do I know that I (depending solely on my own intellectual and spiritual resources) am right?! Or does one not need to be concerned about this?

In fact, the impression is sometimes given that the didactic means justifies the doctrinal end, that is, as far as the correspondents in the case are concerned. There is an (over-) emphasis upon "facilitating analytical and creative skills"; on the "self-involving and self-affirming reciprocal process" which this dialogical approach encourages; on "the integration of knowledge, discernment, and action" that the model promotes and the consequent "growth in Christian maturity" which participants experience. Now these are all valuable by-products of the process of creative interaction, but they should not be allowed to detract from the objective, biblical basis upon which all theologising – whether expository, catechetical, evangelistic, apologetic, or ethical – must be built.

### **WHAT THEN IS THE PLACE OF THE "CASE-METHOD " IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?**

In conclusion, the conception, exposition, and application of the case-study approach in theological education in Africa, for all its potential as an inductively practised, didactic tool, needs to be significantly modified in procedural terms through the placement of much greater – in fact, the predominant – stress upon that principal theological "resource" which precedes and should govern all other considerations, namely, the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God has the authority of our Lord himself, and this cannot be superseded by any other opinion – no matter how pathetic or pressing some contrary human situational circumstances may appear to be, no matter how rational and compelling an antithetical argument might sound.

Similarly, the sufficiency of Scripture must never be underestimated in the search for solutions to the many controversial situations that African Christians, like their counterparts around the world, confront in a basically materialistic, humanistic, and secularised age. A removal of the outer socio-culturally specific wrappings inevitably reveals that we are dealing with essentially the same corrupt core, man's inherent problem – a sinful nature and its various manifestations in life, such as greed, pride, lust, rebellion, superstition, idolatry, and the like. Thus, the solution, too, remains the same, namely, repentance in faith and a submissive re-commitment to the whole will of God, as revealed in his Word through the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this connection then, we should not forget the fundamental clarity of God's Word either, for it still shines forth like a lamp for the feet of modern man as he treads his thorny path through life, just as it did for the ancient psalmist. Once a spiritually regenerated person gets rid of his/her own false presuppositions, prejudices, and preferences, the biblical text usually reads quite clearly with regard to what is right and wrong in the normal, everyday affairs of human existence, no matter what culture and way of life he is heir to and participant in. There are exceptions, of course, but the fundamental assumption concerning the Bible's perspicuity ought never be denied or ignored.

To be sure, the difficult, ambiguous, mentally exhausting, and soul-wrenching cases can and do occur – those calling for firm decisions which cannot be made easily in accordance with established theological and moral principles or some explicit, or even implicit, reference in Scripture to lean on for guidance. The practical methodology described in this essay will certainly assist one in coming to grips with such problems and in narrowing the alternatives for a possible resolution with the help of insights to be derived from what may be better termed the "secondary" resources of grace – past doctrinal and confessional formulations of the church, the shared individual and collective experience of the Christian community, and the knowledge available from science and other secular fields of human learning.

But the latter all need to be kept subservient to the primacy of the Word and a clear recognition of and reverence for its inherent efficacy and authority. For even when silent on a specific issue, the joint, interactive study of Scripture in more general terms, accompanied by a prayer for the Spirit's guidance, will often result in an opening up of the spiritual discernment necessary to solve the problem at hand. As the writer to the Hebrews has so beautifully expressed it:

For the word of God is living and active.  
Sharper than any double-edged sword,  
it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow;

it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (4:12).

We recall that Job in his desperate time of trial and uncertainty did not receive a direct answer to his grievous complaint either--only a simple, yet powerful, exposition of the wondrous glory of his sovereign Creator. Yet that was the only answer he needed in order to recognise the error of his former approach and to adopt a new perspective on the "ways of God" in the world (42:1-6). With the Apostle's exhortation uppermost in our minds then, it behoves us to put biblically based, case-study methodology to widespread, but discerning, use in the service of the African Church of Jesus Christ:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful  
for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness  
so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every  
good work. (2 Tim.3:16-17)

## END NOTES

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<sup>i.</sup> A sample case study entitled "A Case of Cleansing" is available from the author for the cost of reproducing and mailing (\$3.00). Send to: E.W., Lutheran Seminary, P.O. Box 310091, Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>ii.</sup> My initial observations relating to the Chewa oral narrative tradition are recorded in a little UNESCO-sponsored booklet entitled, *Nthano za kwa Kawaza* ("Folktales from Kawaza-land"), Lusaka: Zambia Language Group (1976).

<sup>iii.</sup> Smith, E.W. and Dale, A.M. *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (vol.2, New York: University Books, 1968), pp.332-333.

<sup>iv.</sup> For a more detailed overview of Christ's parable-telling technique in relation to several well-known texts, see E. Wendland, "Finding Some Lost Aspects of Meaning in Christ's Parables of the Lost--And Found (Luke 15)," *Trinity Journal* 17NS (1996), pp.19-65.

<sup>v.</sup> My observations here are based on, yet also certainly limited by, my own personal teaching/learning experience -- that is, 30 years at the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia and 25 years as a translation consultant-adviser with the United Bible Societies in south-central Africa. For most of these years, I have often worked together (to my advantage) with a Zambian colleague, Rev. Salimo Hachibamba.

<sup>vi.</sup> The various citations below are taken from two foundational texts by Robert Evans, entitled *Christian Theology: A Case Study Approach* (1976) and *Introduction to Christianity: A Case Method Approach* (1980), both published by Plowshares Institute (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA).

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# CO-OPERATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

**Isaac Zokoue**

*The International Council of Accrediting Agencies (ICAA) links together evangelical theological education world-wide. This includes the major regional associations for theological schools from Africa (ACTEA), Asia (ATA), the Caribbean (CABC), Europe (EEAA), North America (AABC), Latin America, and the South Pacific. In 1981 the ICAA decided to develop a Manifesto for the renewal of evangelical theological education. After widespread consultations and many revisions, a **Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education** was adopted in 1983. Included in the Manifesto of twelve articles is the following statement on co-operation in theological education, Article 12.*

*Our programmes of theological education must pursue contact and collaboration among themselves for mutual support, encouragement, edification and cross-fertilisation. We are at fault that so often in evangelical theological education we attend merely to our own assignments under God. Others in the same calling need us, and we need them. The biblical notion of mutuality needs to be much more visibly expressed and pragmatically pursued among our theological programmes. Too long we have acquiesced in an isolation of effort that denies the larger body of Christ, thus failing both ourselves and Christ's body. The times in which we serve, no less than biblical expectations, demand of each of us active ongoing initiatives in co-operation. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.*

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*Based on article 12 of the Manifesto, approved by the international consultation on evangelical theological education, is the following paper which was read by Dr. Isaac Zokoue at a colloquium on evangelical leadership development in Africa, held in London, England.*

## INTRODUCTION

The fact that we have become conscious of the necessity of co-operation in theological education, as witnessed by this statement, is itself a sign of spiritual progress. Indeed the lack of co-operation noted in the manifesto is a problem of a spiritual nature more than it is a structural one. It is true that in order to co-operate one begins by establishing a structure and a framework within which this co-operation can be exercised. It is thus obvious that the lack of structure, or simply the absence of channels of communication between the efforts in question produces *de facto* a lack of co-operation. But before coming to the practical problems of this co-operation, I am interested in the reasons behind this lack of co-operation. It is there that I discern some situations for which we have to repent. In the Christian life, a new start is possible only if one acknowledges his sins, confesses them and abandons them. What are these situations?

## REASONS FOR LACK OF CO-OPERATION

### **Competitive Spirit**

Among our institutions there is a *competitive spirit*. Each school believes that it is the best and thus is not prepared to receive or learn from others. A feeling of self-sufficiency then develops. This problem manifests itself in the school's program, for the resource needs of finances and personnel are the same everywhere. But each school institutes a programme which is supposed to justify its existence, that is, a programme adapted to the needs to which the school wishes to respond. That is normal.

But the error comes when one acts as if he is capable, with this programme, to meet every need. This, of course, is impossible. One must recognise one's own limits and, at the same time, acknowledge and encourage what others are doing to fill those gaps in one's own programme. Donors have a role to play in changing this mentality, for it is in order to convince these donors to give that each school does all it can to demonstrate that it is the best and that its function is unique. Our brochures testify to this fact. The donors themselves must recognise the absolute necessity of co-operation among our institutions and must not seek to help them on a competitive basis.

### **Critical Spirit**

Close to the competitive spirit is a *critical spirit*. If someone believes that he is the best, he is prone to point out the faults of others: "That school does not have a good programme, good professors, etc." Criticism is permissible, provided it is justified and especially, provided it is constructive. But often we are simply critical. Our sole purpose is to show that we are doing better than others, and since this is the case, the others need not exist at all. Such attitudes have often led to scattering our efforts, with each one creating or developing his own work, instead of helping to unite our efforts. Division thus triumphs over co-operation. Among evangelicals, it is not unusual that doctrinal problems are at the root of this scattering of effort. But several cases have shown that the doctrinal problems have been somewhat forced, and that people were using them simply as a pretext for separating from others.

### **Denominationalism**

*Denominationalism* has been another important factor behind the lack of co-operation. The dominant situation is that each denomination protects what it has acquired. Denominationalism can exist on the national, regional, continental or international level of the church federations and associations. These church groupings are in fact groupings of denominations at the heart of which the principles of co-operation have been adopted. But strangely enough, these so-called interdenominational works have the least external support and the most difficulty in surviving because the tendency toward isolation and selfishness remains strong. On the other hand, interdenominational co-operation is often limited to the level of church leaders and does not really touch the specialised agencies which remain the denominations' special domain and the source of their pride, not to mention their arrogance.

The *Manifesto* explains this lack of co-operation in terms of such evils as withdrawal, isolation, and ignorance of the true nature of the Body of Christ. In reality, these factors result from the attitudes that we attempted to describe above. If such ignorance exists, that is, not having an adequate vision of the Body of Christ, it is culpable ignorance, for the New Testament is filled with teaching on that subject. It may perhaps be necessary at this juncture to express a regret that evangelicals have let the ecumenical movement have a monopoly on the teaching concerning the unity of Christians. For if one notes a certain myopia on the part of those who have the responsibility to train workers assigned to the building up of the Body of Christ, it is because, in the background, a unified vision of the people of God is missing.



### **Spiritual Deficiency**

I fear falling into casuistry by making this list of the reasons for our failure in co-operation. But I wish by means of these few points to show that the lack of co-operation is a spiritual deficiency, because some fundamentally reprehensible attitudes exist. We cannot then, speak of co-operation as if it were sufficient simply to establish a framework for co-operation and then all will work out fine. It is necessary to begin with a change of attitude, not only in the institutions in question, but also in the churches responsible for these works, indeed even in the donors. The initiative must come from the institutions; they are the ones who will progressively establish the landmarks of this co-operation and help churches accept it. But obviously an institution cannot thrust itself into a programme of co-operation if the ecclesiastical structure on which it depends does not promote or facilitate such an initiative. A strategy of co-operation among donors, and particularly donor organisations, ought to be put into operation in order to support the co-operative effort among theological schools. A change must thus be envisioned at the donor level also.

### **AREAS OF CO-OPERATION**

In recommending co-operation among theological schools, the *Manifesto* proposes several ways and means for attaining this objective: contact, mutual support, encouragement, edification, reciprocal stimulation, and initiative in the co-operation. This set of actions has been presented as our duty to one another. A duty is the opposite of what is optional. The whole question is to determine whether we consider co-operation a duty with all its attendant constraints, or whether we want to consider it a choice. Our approach to this problem, according to the document, must be pragmatic. This signifies that one must not be satisfied with making speeches about co-operation or with simply exhibiting all possible good intentions, but one must rather undertake actions that make co-operation a reality. Thus co-operation appears in the *Manifesto* as a homework assignment that is overdue. There is, therefore, a certain urgency about this subject. But one must "make haste slowly", taking into account some lessons from the past.

There is sometimes a great gulf between intention and reality. For this reason we need to be realistic. It seems to me that there are three fundamental points to consider: 1) the arena of co-operation; 2) the ways and means of co-operation; 3) the geographic limits of co-operation.

#### **Arena of Co-operation**

The life of an institution has several facets, but the arena for co-

operation on which we wish to concentrate here is the educational programme. In this regard, some of the realities are as follows:

a) Each school has its own program of classical subject which can be grouped under such titles as Practical Theology (Homiletics, Pastoral Theology etc.), Church History (from the first to twentieth century), Systematic Theology (a vast domain), Old Testament (elementary Hebrew; Old Testament Introduction, including Archaeology; Biblical Theology of the Old Testament; Old Testament exegesis; etc.), New Testament (similar to that of Old Testament, with Greek replacing Hebrew), and, more and more frequently, Missiology (also a group of subjects including History of Missions, Cultural Anthropology, etc.). Obviously we have not here cited all the courses. These are, however, typical subjects found in most schools. But each school also introduces into this curriculum some subjects dictated by the realities of its particular region. Thus, for example, Traditional African Religions, Islam in Africa, History of Missions in Africa, and so forth, take on more importance in the African context than is the case on the other continents. The difference between schools can also be located in terms of the school's purpose: training of pastors, evangelists, missionaries, teachers, etc. How is it possible to envision co-operation with regard to the different ranges of these programs?

Among the schools that could be aimed at might be:

- **enrichment of one's own program.**

Through the exchange of documents, one is able to discover possible deficiencies in one's own program. A school can settle down into a routine and not seek to innovate, to adapt itself to changes in society and in the church. For example, several schools have not yet seen the need to have any instruction (even cursory) on communications.

- **improvement of teaching.**

Through exchanges of professors or students, one can measure the quality of teaching taking place at the school. It is good to seek to know, by means of an openness to others, whether the level of instruction given in the school allows students to continue their studies in another school at the same or a superior level. Teaching methods can also be a source of mutual inspiration (some professors follow a textbook, others develop their own courses).

- **broadening of horizons.**

At the higher academic levels (masters and doctorate), circulating

theses and dissertations, as well as their publications, can be a source of reciprocal stimulation. If groups of scholars are located in these schools, they will be able to benefit mutually from the results of each other's research. It is often the professors of theology who contribute the most to the advancement of theological reflection.

Let us stop at these three points without claiming to have said all that is essential. This much, however, is sufficient to demonstrate the importance of co-operation at the level of the academic program. The school that cuts itself off from others deprives itself of the many benefits of fraternal co-operation.

b) Another reality about the educational programme is that each school teaches in a language that is not universal. Even though English is widespread, the evangelical world includes groups who are unable to use this language. This fact makes the exchanges we have just mentioned difficult. The only solution is to have resource to interpreters as well as translations. But let us be aware of this: at the international level, true co-operation among our schools is possible only if the linguistic majority takes into consideration the reality of the situation and the existence of linguistic minorities. It is well known that those who speak English do not make the effort to learn other languages. Because of this fact, the minority groups have always been forced to communicate in English or to manage to produce articles in English. Their demand is rather dissuasive and does not encourage co-operation. An understanding must be reached in this area, so that each can communicate in whatever language he chooses.

### **Ways and Means of Co-operation**

The ways and means of co-operation among theological schools remain to be discovered. There are two possibilities:

a) It would be wrong to believe that co-operation of a certain active form does not exist among several of our schools, even if it takes place without being co-ordinated. Indeed, experience shows that the creation of a committee or an organisation is not always the best way to begin a work, especially if that work calls for volunteers. A fair number of inoperative organisations and committees exist. Taking into account the fact that a multitude of such groups already exist in our midst, it would make sense not to create a new one. Existing channels of communication can be used. At the continental level there are organisations linking theological institutions. Universal platforms also exist at the intercontinental level. It is therefore possible to ask these organisations, each at its own level, to encourage co-operation among our schools. Exchanges of documents and notices of job openings and positions sought can pass through these organisations.

b) A second possibility would be to create a group that would be responsible for promoting co-operation. Experience has also shown that if a decision is made without delegating someone to carry it out, that decision is useless. There is thus an advantage to be gained in giving the responsibility to designated persons. But taking into account the very nature of this undertaking, namely, co-operation – which is a matter of free and personal commitment to working with others, it does not seem to me advisable to create a committee with this goal. It is possible to consider such a committee as responding to the need for co-ordination. Yet once again I do not think it necessary to have a group of co-ordinators in this domain. One is quickly in danger putting people under pressure and pushing them into actions that are not freely decided upon. The sought-after stimulation can be transformed into mental pressure.

We retain therefore the idea of *not* creating a special structure for promoting co-operation among our schools. The *Manifesto*, as a document, is itself a group product. This means that the group which produced the *Manifesto* can make sure that each of its twelve points moves into the phase of application. Other arguments that I have not mentioned here could militate in favour of the creation of such a group. In this case, a trial period would be advisable.

### **Geographic Limits of Co-operation**

The geographic limits of co-operation among our schools ought to be defined. Do we wish to speak of co-operation among countries using the same language, among countries of the South or of the North only, among regional organisations or among continental organisations? Without further ado, let us say that the co-operation we extol ought to be multi-directional: North-North, South-South, North-South. Each direction has its own advantages. The directions North-North and South-South have the advantage that the co-operation will be richer because there will be many things to share. It is also to be noted that the North-North exchanges have often been easier. The South-South exchanges are more difficult and thus merit particular attention and support. The direction North-South or South-North will have the advantage of establishing co-operation on the foundation of an encounter between western and non-western cultures. Openness along this axis has already often been the case from the South to the North, but not yet, or else timidly, from the North to the South, a direction which ought to be encouraged. The evangelical world is seeking more and more to tighten its bonds, and co-operation at the theological level ought to be a cohesive factor in this search.

There should be no limits to co-operation among theological schools. If one recognises that theology has more often divided than united evangelicals, one will be prepared to encourage every initiative in this area. Schools, more so

than churches, are in the best position to give direction to this co-operation. Where this co-operation is in danger of running into difficulties is the doctrinal positions of the participants. Co-operation on the programme level is not going to come about in isolation from an understanding of the diverse doctrinal positions at the heart of the evangelical world. One can imagine that each group would be open only to those with whom they have doctrinal affinities. This kind of co-operation is inevitable, but the co-operation that we seek must not be discriminatory. Its objective is to reinforce theological education among evangelicals of each continent and hence of the whole world. This is a new concept.

I have taken the liberty to speak of co-operation among our schools in a broader framework, but everything that I have said is also true for Africa taken in isolation. Intra-African co-operation exists, but it very much needs to be strengthened. We must welcome and encourage all possibilities of co-operation in the African evangelical world. As the *Manifesto* says, "This we must accomplish, by God's grace."

# REFLECTIONS ON MUSLIM EVANGELISM: *APPROACH TO THE RELIGIOUS PERSON*

**Y. Sephiros**

*Islam represents 1.2 billion people throughout the world. They are engaged in aggressive missionary expansion, using many of the methods which have been successfully used by the Christian church to evangelise. These methods include education, medical, literature, videos and cassettes, street preachers and community development. At the same time there is a growing concern in Christian circles to provide a more comprehensive and effective witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ among the Muslims. AJET has provided several articles on Muslim evangelism found in issue 15.1 1996.*

*In this article Sephiros underlines an important aspect in Muslim evangelism. Instead of focusing on Islam as a religion, Christians should focus on the Muslim as a person who needs the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## INTRODUCTION

Within the context of Muslim evangelism this paper is going to focus on a person called a *Muslim*, not on a religion called *Islam*. It is only when we view the Muslim as a person and understand him as a person that we can effectively present the gospel to him, rather than judging him by his religion. In this point of view Jesus is the best model in presenting the gospel to Muslims. For this reason Jesus' conversation with the scribe in Mark 12:28-34 will be our reference Scripture in understanding the Muslim and our attitude towards him.

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One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked Him "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one", answered Jesus, "is this, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask Him any more questions (Mark 12:28-34 NIV).

## THE PROBLEM

During Jesus' day Rabbis divided the precepts of the law into "weighty" commandments, such as the command, "Thou shalt not kill," and "light" commandments, such as the prohibition of taking a bird from the nest with her fledglings or with the egg. Judaism drew no distinction between the moral and ceremonial law, for both were inextricably connected with the life of the people as a whole. Therefore the problem for a godly Jew in Jesus' day was the multiplicity of laws. It is amid this baffling profusion that the scribe in the narrative asks for guidance. Two attitudes characterise this scribe.

### He Was Perplexed

Comparing his weakness and what the law expects of him, he was totally confused what to do. Because he found himself helpless to do the whole law perfectly, he resorted to selecting the greatest "one". He was genuinely perplexed. He had a riddle in life which he wanted Jesus to solve.

Similarly since Islam is a religion of works one can imagine the stress this imposes in a Muslim's mind. The Qur'an teaches that,

The balance that day will be (to a nicety): Those whose scale (of good)

will be heavy, will prosper: Those whose scale will be light, will find their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated our signs (Sura 7:8,9).

No matter what the word "prosper" might actually mean in this verse, it is clear that the Muslim will strive his best to attain that prosperity. Equally with this, since he does not know the exact standard, he will struggle to be as good as he can. When he feels he is not being as good as he should be, he gets confused. Law and justice being the basis for all thoughts and behaviour in Islam, there is no flexibility in deciding the right, and compromises are seldom possible. If some injustice is done by trying to compromise, then such sin results in reprisal and punishment. Soon the fear and confusion starts to manifest itself in many ways. Sometimes it appears in the form of political conflicts such as in Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zanzibar, and Gambia. Even sometimes it is manifested as clashes between rival Islamic groups like in Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Tanzania and Sudan. Getting frustrated, such people start to view the world order as miserable. They become unhappy people, plunged in reckless dissatisfaction. That is why today such people are continuing to "generate havoc and violence in the form of fundamentalism, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike."<sup>1</sup>

Mohammed Arkoun, professor of Islamic thought at the Sorbonne University in Paris, stated that "No state has met the ideal requirement of Islam- and that is assuming anyone could."<sup>2</sup> Hence, the confusion created in the mind of a Muslim who is programmed to reach an ideal. An unattainable goal is really devastating.

At this point we can define a Muslim as a spiritually dissatisfied person who struggles with ineffective means to find favour in the sight of his non-understanding god, who expects his worshippers to be what they can not actually be.

### **He Was Truth-Seeking**

Unlike his fellow scribes, this scribe did not come to test Jesus. The Bible tells us that he came to Jesus "noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer." From his attitude we see that he was having a genuine question for which he wanted to know the true answer. In asking Jesus sincerely which commandment is the greatest, what he wanted to know practically was "which is that command which we ought to have in a special manner an eye to, and our

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<sup>1</sup> Pipes, Daniel. *Newsweek*, March 12, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> Arkoun Mohammed. *Time*, June 15, 1992.



obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest?"<sup>3</sup> He really wanted a safe exit from his confusion. He really trusted Jesus that he could give him a satisfying answer. Reverend Robert Jamieson comments that he "answered 'intelligently' or 'sensibly' not only in a good spirit, but with a promising measure of insight into spiritual things."<sup>4</sup>

As their first trial to find a way out of their frustration, many Muslims are observed trying to get a satisfying answer within the boundary of Islam by supporting different Islamic groups. The Sudanese example is one. Many initially welcomed the fundamentalist coup and its promises of organisation and order following the disarray of the last government. But today most Sudanese, however devout they may be, are "more fearful than fulfilled."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Len Bartlotti of the Centre for Ministry to Muslims (Assemblies of God) says that Muslims in West Germany are "reachable but neglected,"<sup>6</sup> indicating that they would seek the *truth* if they could get it.

The reason that makes a Muslim seek the real Truth is to be found behind Allah, the object of worship in Islam. Though "The Merciful" is one of his beautiful names, he remains distant and impersonal. If the one who claims to be the merciful fails to show mercy, it is inevitable for the soul of a Muslim to look for a reliable Truth.

## THE SOLUTION

Four attitudes characterise Jesus' approach in solving the scribe's problem.

### **Jesus Was Available**

Because of his dealings with the first three scribes who came to test Him, Jesus could have reserved Himself from this last sincere scribe and ignored him. But Jesus did not do so. He made Himself available for this truth-seeking scribe. He didn't show any sign that might have made the scribe feel uninvited or unaccepted. He made him feel free to ask any question for which he wanted an answer.

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<sup>3</sup> Henry, Matthew. *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.

<sup>4</sup> Jamieson, Robert. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

<sup>5</sup> *Time* magazine, June 15, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Bartlotti, Len, quoted by Kevin Piecuch. *Christianity Today*, March 5, 1990.

### **Jesus Was Understanding**

Observing the genuineness of the scribe, Jesus showed compassion towards him. He discerned his real problem. Because he knew well the day-to-day life of the Jews under the law, Jesus tried to show in action that he, the scribe, is one of the subjects for whom he came to liberate from bondage. By trying to put Himself in the place of the scribe, Jesus understood his real situation.

### **Jesus Was Specific in His Message**

Once He understood the objective situation of His subject, Jesus spoke to him with a specific message – the message of *love* without beating around the bush. Probably the scribe viewed God not as a loving father but as a fault finder who maliciously counts failures. Hence Jesus explained to him how love, both from God's and man's direction, solves everything.

### **Jesus Was Kingdom-Oriented**

In helping the scribe, Jesus was not persuading him to leave Judaism but showing him the way to join God's Kingdom. He did not try to impose a new religion on him but simply tried to indicate the new path of love to approach God.

## **THE REFLECTION**

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters," said Jesus in Matthew 12:30. God knows no gray area. Everything is either black or white. That is to say, everyone in this world belongs either to God's Kingdom or outside of it. No one can be in between. And since Jesus is the only way to that Kingdom, anyone who does not accept the Jesus of the Bible is out of that Kingdom. Therefore, those who are already in the Kingdom, namely Christians, have a responsibility of bringing such people, like the Muslims, to the Kingdom. Our best example for such a mission is Jesus Christ Himself.

Phil Parshall in his book, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, says that "there is no ultimate methodology, only an ultimate message."<sup>7</sup> Having this in mind, leaving aside talking about techniques, we can learn something from

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<sup>7</sup> Parshall, Phil. *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989.

Jesus' attitude towards people who need the ultimate message – in our case, the Muslims.

### **Availability**

Tullio Vinay, founder of the *Agape* movement in the Waldensian Church, once said that,

The church's task is not to save itself – Christ has already done that. It is rather to give itself in love and service – in fact to die for the world.<sup>8</sup>

God did not design his church to struggle for survival within itself, but to be the "aroma of His Son Jesus Christ" in a dying world.<sup>9</sup> Hence it would be shameful for the church to say that it is too busy with some thing else, while neglecting the needy ones. Speaking about the time of Christians, Kevin Howard says,

The one who always cries, Too Busy! but never manages his time is like the one who constantly bounces checks but refuses to look at his bank statement. It is suicidal, no matter how you look at it.<sup>10</sup>

Let's make ourselves available first for the needy Muslims before we condemn them because of their religion.

### **Understanding**

The reason why Jesus showed compassion to the scribe was because He understood his problem. He felt the situation of the scribe which was sandwiched between the binding requirements of the law and his burning zeal for God. This feeling is what led Jesus to give him the appropriate message.

Similarly, it is only when we understand the real situation of Muslims that we can reach them with the gospel. Rather than judging them by how they behave, let's understand the problem that drives them to behave so. No one who has a biased view of Jesus has ever had any peace with himself. The reason is that such people do not understand that the real meaning of life lies in the single idea, "God so loved the world". Speaking about the Muslim view point, Juck Budd says the following, quoting al Gazali,

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<sup>8</sup> Vinay, Tullio, quoted by Howard Snyder, *Lion Hand Book of Christian Belief*. Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:15.

<sup>10</sup> Howard, Kevin. *Israel My Glory*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Feb/Mar 1987.

... it is inconceivable that Allah should love mankind because when there is love there must be in the lover a sense of incompleteness, a realisation that the beloved is needed for complete realisation of self. This is completely impossible with Allah, since Allah is perfectly complete... Thus any idea that God so loved the world that He gave His only son is completely foreign to the Muslim mind.<sup>11</sup>

On top of this, owing to the fact that no Muslim can be certain about his destination, the Muslim spirit is a restless spirit. Even Mohammed himself is reported to have said,

Verily the Almighty and Glorious Allah took hold of one with his right hand and another with the other hand, and said: This is for this and this is for this, and I don't care. I don't know in which of the two (hands) I am.<sup>12</sup>

Can you imagine the pain you would have felt in your soul as a follower of Jesus, had Jesus said in His last hour on the cross "I am sorry men, I am not sure if I can finish what has to be done in your place"? That is why we have to understand the Muslim first in order to tell him that he can have an eternal lover who can give him a certain destination, unlike his prophet which was not sure even about himself.

### **Specificity**

Christopher Lamb had this to say, to the effect that it is the quality of what we preach and not the quantity that matters.

So much preaching and writing is preaching and writing past people, meeting neither felt nor real need. We answer questions people are not asking, or have ceased to ask or have not yet thought of asking. We talk our own jargon in our own tongue and wonder why no one understands.<sup>13</sup>

In His conversation with the scribe, Jesus wonderfully knit together the whole law of God into a single idea – *love*. The Hebrew word for *love* in the Old Testament verses which Jesus quoted implies "an ardent and vehement

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<sup>11</sup> Budd, Jack, *How to Witness to Muslims*, Red Sea Mission Team, 1983.

<sup>12</sup> Mishkat III, P. 118.

<sup>13</sup> Lamb, Christopher, quoted by Anne Cooper, *Ishmael My Brother*. MARC STL Books, Evangelical Missionary Alliance, 1988.

inclination of the mind and a tenderness of affection at the same time... It denotes a strong emotional attachment for and a desire to possess or be in the presence of the object of love."<sup>14</sup>

The Greek counterpart of the word indicates,

a benevolent love, the benevolence of which is not shown by doing what the person loved desires but what the one who loves deems as needed by the one loved, for example as in John 3:16. God's love for man is God doing what He thinks best for man and not what he desires. It is God's wilful direction towards man. But for man to show love to God, he must first appropriate God's love, for only God has such an unselfish love.<sup>15</sup>

The reason why Jesus gave this message to the scribe was because He knew that the scribe did not understand love as God views it. If we were to analyse his attitude from today's ground, using New Testament terminology, we would say that he was trying to please and worship God before he appropriated God's love as expressed through Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross.

Do you think a Muslim needs any other message than the message of love? From whatever angle we examine it, this is the message of the gospel which is the "perfect law that gives freedom."<sup>16</sup>

Under the magnifying glass, the fundamentalist activity around the world today is a desperate move to liberate themselves from Islam and not to liberate others for Islam. Ten years back no one dreamed Afghanistan would be what it is today. All factions in the country were fighting for a unified Afghanistan covered by *Sharia* law under the Qur'an. But to the amazement of the world they continued fighting even after they drove out what they called their "oppressors". The simple reason is that the bondage is in the soul of each individual Muslim fighter, not a physical one on the country as a whole. Do you think a soul under such a situation needs a message other than the gospel of liberty proclaiming God's love as expressed through Jesus Christ? So being specific in our message, it is our responsibility first to bring the good news of God's love to the Muslims, this needy portion of the community of mankind.

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<sup>14</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros, *Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible*, AMG, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> James 1:25 NIV.

## Orientation

There is a fictitious story about Peter the apostle, that one day he will stand at the gate of heaven and ask the people coming, "Are you Roman Catholic? Sometimes churches are side tracked by spreading their own religion and forgetting that they are here to propagate God's kingdom.

When Jesus saw that the scribe answered discretely and intelligently, He commended him with respect to God's Kingdom. Jesus, being Kingdom oriented, was not persuading him either to leave one religion or join another. In this world what mattered for Jesus was the propagation and expansion of God's Kingdom as he continued to do so through his Spirit as recorded in the Book of Acts.

At times in our effort to "work for God" we philosophise too much and end up making people mere church-goers. Nowadays many churches and organisations have adapted so many methodologies and techniques, including development work like education and agriculture, to reach the unreached Muslims. But it is sad to see such churches and organisations abandoning the very mission for which they were called. The only reason for this is because they are not being Kingdom oriented. The fame and praise which the hungry stomach is throwing at them blurs their vision. Speaking about the intended human transformation in development work Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo once said,

Human transformation involves inward and outward environment. It is the bringing of inward and outward environment under the leadership of Christ.<sup>17</sup>

Though we may use many of our activities to show our Christian love to our Muslim neighbours, it ends up in vain unless our move is Kingdom oriented to make Christ reign in their hearts.

The gospel should be proclaimed both in word and in deed. We need both to identify with the non-Christians in their need and to tell them the Christian 'Good News.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Adeyemo, Tokunboh, *Second Consultation on the Role of Evangelical Fellowship and Organisations in Relief and Development in Africa.* January 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Snyder, Howard, *Lion Hand Book of Christian Belief.* Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1988.

## CONCLUSION

Finally here are some questions which help us identify our problem areas so that we may be able to keep track of God's plan for the world of Islam.

1. Do we ourselves have the life of God about which we are preaching to others? "Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread," said D.T. Neils.<sup>19</sup> You can't tell others where to find the bread of life unless you first have it for yourself. Howard Snyder said,

Witness springs from the church's worship and community life. A church weak in worship has little inclination to witness, nor does it have much to witness about... Evangelism and service may be thought of as representing the church's witness by word and by deed... not just by individual believers but by the Christian community functioning as a body, which gives the church's life in the world an authentic impact for the Kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup>

You can radiate liberty to a Muslim if only you have already appropriated it for yourself through the redeeming power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

2. If we already have life in ourselves, as individuals, churches and organisations, are we pushing forward or stagnating in some comfortable corner? Someone has said "A ship in a harbour is safe, but that is not the purpose for which ships are built." Some got their ship of faith broken. Some have abandoned the stormy field of Muslim evangelism to search for "smooth" fields. But beyond this we mention with a sense of humiliation that some have left church buildings to be converted into Mosques,<sup>21</sup> while Islam is continuing to programme its young adherents with bitterness and bondage. Half of all Muslims in the world today are under twenty years of age. For example, a 1977 manual for Jordanian first grade teachers states,

It is necessary to implant in the soul of the pupil the rule of Islam so that if the enemies occupy even one inch of the Islamic lands, *jihad* becomes imperative for every Muslim.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of such a move on the side of Islam, in which direction are we

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<sup>19</sup> Neils, D.T, *Ibid*.

<sup>20</sup> Snyder, Howard. *The Lion Handbook of Christian Belief*. Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1988.

<sup>21</sup> Piecuch, Kevin, *Christianity Today*, March 5, 1990.

<sup>22</sup> *Israel My Glory*, Vol. 51 No. 3, June/July 1993.

moving? Are we pushing forward effectively so that our next generation may appropriate the living faith? Do not lose your vision. "Where there is no vision the people perish."<sup>23</sup>

3. Do we have a strong faith that "the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world"?<sup>24</sup> Do you realise that God's arm is strong enough to destroy every stronghold, including Islamic arrogance? Mr. Ian M. Hay, the ex-General Director of SIM International, recently said in an interview,

If God, in such a brief period of time, can upset the whole communist world, what about Islam?... (Islam) is a cracked wall. And as strong as the fundamentalist Muslim seems to be at the moment, it is fragile. Even in those countries, most people will not tolerate that rigidity for long. It is going to change. And God has different ways of doing that.<sup>25</sup>

Two decades back it was impossible to talk about the fall of communism. But God did hear the prayer of many faithful men and women who constantly prayed for this to happen. How about you? Do you trust the Lord that one day He will demolish the Islamic pride? In every step of your move in this ministry, your faith in the Lord will determine your fruit and victory.

After we are clear concerning our attitudes, then for God there is no question of possibility because everything is possible for Him. As to us there will be no problem because we have cleared every obstacle from our side. As to the devil he will continue to wage war against us. But praise God! Victory is finally ours, for "we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

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<sup>23</sup> Proverbs 29:18 KJV.

<sup>24</sup> I John 4:4 NIV.

<sup>25</sup> Hay, Ian M, *SIMNOW*, Feb/Apr 1993.



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Being Human in a Christian Perspective**  
(Series F2: Brochures of the  
Institute for Reformational Studies no. 68).

**B.J. van der Walt**

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education:  
Potchefstroom, South Africa. 1997. Pp. 83. ISBN 1-86822-257-8.

The small book is the text of a conference lecture given by the author, and a summary of material in an earlier book, *The liberating message: a Christian world view for Africa* (1994 & 1996 from the same publisher). Prof. Bennie van der Walt is Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Institute for Reformational Studies at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, South Africa. He covers the present topic, a Christian view of man, under six characteristics: man is a sexual, holistic, multi-dimensional, religious, cultural, and individual-communal being. (The author explicitly states that he is using the term 'man' and masculine pronouns in a generic sense for convenience, and intends no gender prejudice).

Each topic is covered briefly, but is amazingly comprehensive through the use of numerous headings and lists of points, with concisely-worded and sometimes provocative comments (see the list of stereotype attitudes towards women in 1.5, for example). The text is assertive rather than persuasive in its style, and some readers might find its tone irritating. The book provides a useful summary of many important facets of our complex human nature. It reads more like a summary than a discussion, and offers a generalised account which slices through various controversial issues, such as the current gender debate. Although short, it is not simple. The author has worked hard to be clear, but makes few concessions in language, and refers to a number of other opinions and scholars. Some of those referred to will not be widely known, and there is no bibliography to follow them up.

The six topics are presented as separate chapterlets, and cover in order: the complementarity of human gender and sexuality; the unity of physical and spiritual aspects of our being; the complexity of our nature, an overview of competing religious systems, including the biblical system, and our creation in God's image and consequent falseness/sinfulness; the relational aspects of human nature, including personal relationships to God, other people and the creation; the complementarity between our individuality and our social dependence, and the danger of one swallowing the other. The book is rounded off by 12 pages of substantive discussion questions (70 questions listed). Van der Walt continually seeks to relate each topic to the African context.

One or two specific comments on points of special interest are worth making here. The author takes a nonsense stance with regard to the equality of the genders in all aspects of life, while respecting the obviously different biological roles of the two sexes (1.4, 1.6). While gender equality is sometimes a controversial matter, few can deny that our traditional societies, in North and South worlds, have often been overly authoritarian with regard to male supremacy. Two brief sections (1.8, 1.9) deal with marital fidelity and singleness, but nothing is said about either monogamy or polygamy. In dealing with the cultural diversity of the human community, the author misses addressing both inter-ethnic relationships and the issue of language diversity. The first is a tough one, but we need to address it urgently. Has Christianity anything substantive to offer in the area of inter-ethnic relations? If so, what is it? The second, that our group culture is strongly reflected in language, is surely one of the most neglected issues in the church's reflection today. This must be particularly the case in Africa where no nation state is monolingual (even excluding European languages). Our language no less than our culture needs to be confronted with the claims of Christ the King. A dangerous dualism lurking in many corners consists of worshipping God in French or English while fomenting disharmony through our vernacular languages. 'With the same tongue we praise God and curse men' (Jas 3:9), even as we may use different languages in each case. Finally, there is a good discussion of our human attitude and responsibility toward the natural world (5.3). Here too, Christian practice is much-criticised in the modern world, and responsible stewardship needs to be more central on the church's agenda.

In essence providing us with a potted systematic theology (although it is founded as much on socio-cultural anthropology as on the biblical text, and biblical references are rather few), van der Walt nevertheless builds on a set of characteristics that do not form the backbone of most traditional theological discussion, and uses a vocabulary that provides a much needed modern alternative to older theological texts. It is significant that he starts with gene, and the unity and complexity of human make-up, before coming to human religious

but fallen nature, and then moving off again to deal with cultural, social and individual aspects of our being. This approach has the effect of dealing with us as we find ourselves in our modern life-view, and of integrating our religious nature into our overall complexity. Indeed the fourth topic, man as a religious being, might well have come last, to provide an explanatory conclusion for the form our humanness takes.

The book deserves to be in the bibliography of theology courses for the provocative way in which it realises issues, but is too sweeping to be a text in itself. It will provide a good check list for theology teachers to make sure that serious current issues are covered (bearing in mind the omissions noted above). The book constantly returns to relational aspects of our nature, and to the ways in which observed two-sidedness in human nature reveals complementarity and not polarisation; in the author's terms, duality, but not dualism. This, in fact, probably sums up what is distinctive about the Christian view of human nature, and of religion itself.

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**Whole Gospel. Whole World: The Foreign Mission  
Board of the Southern Baptist Convention**

*William R. Estep*

Nashville: Boradman and Holman, 1994

xx, 429 pp., many illustrations. ISBN 0-8054-1041-4

This book was written for the 150<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (USA) in 1994. The Policy Subcommittee of the Board gave the writing of the manuscript its oversight and approval. The book does not intend to be a history of all Southern Baptist missionary work, but only that done by the board which directs the denomination's foreign effort. In that effort, 38,741 Southern Baptist churches co-operate, supporting, 3,911 missionaries, working in 126 countries world wide (1994).

Since the book deals with a major mission present in many African countries, it is a useful resource in understanding this mission, some of whose policies differed considerably not only from those of the classical missions of the Great Awakening (today often called 'ecumenical') from among whom it originated, but also from those of other evangelical missions with whom it now associates.

Estep ably traces the whole history of Southern Baptist missions, starting with Adoniram and Ann Judson's work in Burma, understandably giving much weight to the personalities of the successive leaders. But he also traces structural developments, showing how the Board in the beginning almost *created* the Southern Baptist Convention as a denomination, via an *independent* mission board supported by the churches of the Convention (with an equally independent women's board) becoming the powerful and strongly centralised mission board of a centralised denomination (despite all the Baptist emphasis on the independence of the local church).

As such the Board became involved from 1979 onwards in the "conservative/progressive" conflict within the Southern Baptist denomination which led to the resignation of Keith Parks as President of the Foreign Mission Board in 1972, and to the formation of the Co-operative Baptist Fellowship as a competing foreign mission organisation for Southern Baptist churches, a development which so far has affected Europe much more than Africa. The author himself seems to try not to take sides too much in the controversy, as pages 384-388 show, where he equally endorses: institutions, preaching only, relief aid, and volunteers.

Written in these circumstances, the book tries to avoid extremes and to justify hope. Estep is convinced that, just as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the FMB overcame the Landmark crisis (with its peculiar concept of church history), and the Gospel Missionary Movement in China (with its peculiar missiology), and did so by being firm *and* accepting genuine concern and devotion to Christ, it will also similarly recover from the results of the "conservative/progressive" controversy today. Currently the Board seems to be in the *firm* phase, thoroughly rethinking its principles and priorities and revamping its work on the mission fields accordingly. Presently the indigenous principle (assumed but never clearly defined in this book) is being given a new meaning through the policy of "nationalisation" (not explicitly mentioned in the book), a policy not demanded by the "nations", which leads to the shedding of all institutions by the mission, so that it can concentrate purely on evangelism, with high priority of reaching the unreached people groups. Although these developments took place after the book was written, the book can help greatly in understanding the new policies. For example, even if one does not like the changes, it can help in understanding the background for those changes to have the clarification that for the Southern Baptist Mission the [American] "mission" and the [national] "church" must remain eternally separate.

While the book can be of help to those who in any way co-operate with the Southern Baptists, it is also for missiologists an important book for learning about mission administration, and mission strategies and changes therein. Over the last decades the Southern Baptists kept the full emphasis on career missionaries, but combined this with a strong emphasis on "journeymen" (inclusive of women) missionaries, who serve a few years and use only English (p. 309), and "volunteers", who serve for four months to a year or two. These programmes are considered a great success, but the issue is not resolved how such missionary affluence (a four months' volunteer costs several thousands dollars) can be paired with the indigenous principles, on the strength of which the Baptist Mission has to refuse to buy a tin roof for a church (for a few hundred dollars, and something that can last many years).

Here the limitations of the book show: it is written for a jubilee, not to discuss missiology. That is left to the reader to do, but it is worthwhile doing so with the help of this book.

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