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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology



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Africa Journal Of Evangelical Theology

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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.

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Editorial: No Other Name

In Acts 4:12 Peter told a Jerusalem audience just what made Jesus Christ so unique. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Those words got Peter into trouble in his day and they continue to be criticized in our own day.

To make exclusive claims about Jesus Christ is today regarded as religious imperialism. The contemporary Christian, whether in Africa or elsewhere is told that since religion is a product of culture, no one has the right to make universal and exclusive religious claims.

Most Christians in Africa have ignored the complaints of religious pluralists. African Christians continue to sing, preach and witness that Jesus is the "way, the truth and the life." African Christians insist that their Lord and Master in his Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 commanded them to proclaim him throughout the world as the only way of salvation. That attitude has been costly. Christians have been persecuted all over the world in almost every generation of history for

repeating the message of Peter that "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which they must be saved."

In this issue of the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* Professor Odubata Onunwa of Nigeria examines the complaints of modern religious pluralists and seeks to defend the ancient Christian claims for the uniqueness of Christ. Eunice Kamaara writes about a second controversial area --that of Christian morality -- in her essay. Two review articles deal with important topics in African Christianity. Augustine Musopole looks at the foundations of a truly African Christian theology in his articles on "Evangelicals and African Christian Theology." Zacharia Samita takes a serious look AIDS in his review article. A pair of valuable book reviews round out this issue.

AJET was founded fifteen years ago to explore the implications of the uniqueness of Christ for Africa. As this issue demonstrates, the convictions expressed in Acts 4:12 continue to define our mission.

* * * *

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Religious Exclusivism and the Challenge of Contemporary Evangelization

Dr Udobata Onunwa

Christianity did not enter an "empty-world." We may state with some measure of historical certainty that the Roman Empire provided the "nursery bed" in which the early church was nurtured. Some of the old conceptions common to popular religions which existed earlier than Christianity helped to build up some of its basic doctrinal formulation. For instance the idea of the *LOGOS* propounded by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus became one of the explanatory theological categories of the doctrine of the young church. The Christian doctrine of immortality of the soul was not entirely new because it had been propounded long before Christianity in the philosophy of Plato. Furthermore, the stress laid on individual personality by Stoicism

influenced the Christian understanding and explanation of personal conscience and relationship to God. These and other factors do not in any way deny the uniqueness of Christianity in its origin, content, expansion and mission.

On the social level, the unifying Roman language, good roads, prevalent "Pax Romana", stabilizing force of Imperial Justice, were among the facilities provided by the secular world in which Christianity was born. The relationship between the Greek philosophical thought and Christianity is complex. Christianity, however, had to select what seemed good and profitable to her own survival and expansion. Although Graeco-Roman influence on Christianity at its initial stage was immense, the originality and peculiarity of the life and mission of the

church must not be ignored. The gradual collapse of the Roman Empire from the fourth century on made the Church face another encounter with non-Christian ideologies. Her future survival and continuity as an independent institution therefore depended on her ability to make right choices.

This preamble on the ideological and environmental situation that confronted early Christianity is to enable the reader to focus his attention on the aim of this paper which is trying to look at an age-long problem from a new perspective. The problem of religious exclusivism or inclusivism has faced every past generation. This paper will therefore address itself to an evaluation of how this old problem could be tackled in our own contemporary period in the light of our own existential milieu. The Church is not only existing in a multifaith or pluralistic society, but also in an age that is characterized by racial discrimination, hunger, materialism terrorism, oppression, war, drought, environmental pollution, crime, threat of natural disaster, international conspiracy and sabotage, and a host of other problems. Yet she has the Great Commission to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all men, in all places and at all times.

It is in the context of the realization of the above task of the church in the

modern world that we shall critically analyze the views of three eminent scholars in recent discussions on the relationship of Christianity with other religions. The three scholars are John Hick, Ninian Smart and Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Our approach will be both critical and constructive in order to emerge with a more unified approach that will make the Church conscious of her mission to the present world.

Three views on Religious Exclusivism

The choice of Hick, Smart and Smith is not arbitrary. The three of them represent a group of modern radical scholars whose views on "religious exclusivism" are repugnant to anyone (fundamentalist or liberal) who is still concerned for the mission of the Church. Three principal works published in 1980 and 1981 by these three scholars were overtly against the existence of the Church as a separate institution. In each of the said works, the three men were articulate and consistent in their call on Christianity to take its place as only one among equals in the assembly of world religions. Christianity to them is, at best, to be seen as one of those paths and ways of seeking for the ultimate Reality or among many human attempts to find out the Truth which is far wider than

claims can be made to possess it within the sphere of any one religious tradition.

Jesus had earlier warned the first apostles that they were in "the world but not of the world," probably implying a wise approach to the things they would encounter in their ministry in the world. Paul realized this when Christianity encountered the Gentile world and was cautious. Differing interpretations of this injunction has thrown many people into two diametrically opposed camps of religious exclusivism and inclusivism.

But as we earlier noted, Christians borrowed reasonably from the Graeco-Roman world in order to make the Gospel message intelligible. That could be appropriately referred to as the genesis of the current "inculturation process" which is going on now in some places. But John Hick has vigorously advocated that Christians should reject the idea of religious exclusivism totally. He has opined that the 6th and 7th centuries B.C. were the axial period in the history of religions. It was an epoch when most Eastern religions - Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and the revived prophetic Judaism, blossomed. Hick is of the view that these religions were confined to their ethnic and national borders because of geographical isolation of one place from the other. People could not interact

freely because of mobility problems imposed by lack of communication and transport. Since such isolation that cut off one people from the other is now bridged, we can unite all religions into a homogeneous or monolithic body. The synthesis of all religions (including Christianity and Islam which began after the axial period) is now necessary because we are in closer contact with people of other races, tongues and faiths than our forefather who lived several centuries ago.

Secondly Hick argues that Christianity has not been successful in countries possessing an ancient national religion that has its own scriptures. Christian mission is therefore a failure. Christianity, according to him, does not command large followership in such countries as China, India and Japan that still hold large concentration of the world's population. In these cases, as a minority faith, Christianity could as well give up its right to independent existence and join the other religions as one strong and unified system.

The two reasons of Hick are not convincing enough for Christianity to lose its identity or ignore its mission to the world. Professor Hick has failed to tell his readers which of these Eastern religions has a large following outside its home-base. In trying to unite all forms of religious groups, who would rally around them for the exercise? Is it

the one that has the smallest number of followers or the one that has the largest? This is not another form of an ecumenical movement among the various branches of the Christian Church. This call by Hick is an entirely different one; a total abandonment of identity of Christianity. The abandonment of "blind exclusivism" by Christianity should be done for a more important reason: the Church's realization of her supreme task, the Great Commission. It is her mission to the world that should challenge her to open her arms to embrace those outside the fold so that just as there is one shepherd, there should be one fold. A closed fist cannot receive; should an honest man who holds a correct view abandon his stand because many ignorant or self-willed people do not belong to his camp or have decided to oppose him? The question of the truth of a position does not depend on the number of people who follow it.

Although Wilfred Cantwell-Smith and Ninian Smart strongly share the views of John Hick, that exclusivism should be abandoned, they proffer more cautious reasons for their stand. Ninian Smart, for instance, is more cautious, although he tries to reduce Christ to the level of mere humanity. He tries to explain his grounds in a theory he described as "transcendental pluralism." It is a theory which recognize the reality

of the "Beyond" which according to him is experienced in all the various forms of religions. Unfortunately the ideas of a "Beyond" in the religious systems enunciated by Smart contradict themselves. For instance, a Buddhist concept of the "Beyond" is completely different from a Christian understanding of it.

Christianity accepts the concept of "personality." God is personal in the sense that he can relate to individuals in their personal experiences and encounters with Him. In Buddhism, there is a total denial of personality. Religion to a Buddhist could at best be seen as a "moral principle without God". This is one of the weaknesses of Smart's overgeneralization that "all religions" are or can be a proper channel to the "Beyond." The attempt by Smart to bring in the Christian idea of "self-denial" within the concept of the Buddhist notion of "not-self" (anatta) is merely begging the question. Both are not complementary but contradictory. Probably Smart is thinking of the old Anglo-Catholic theological notion of the Incarnation which is interpreted in terms of "self-emptying" of Jesus of all he is and has (except love). By divesting himself of all his divine attributes and rights, he became a man, and suffered on the cross for the good of mankind. This self-sacrificial death on the cross for the salvation of man, is

re-enacted each time we assemble for the Eucharist - the sacrifice of the Mass. Smart concluded that it is "ludicrous for Christians to try to convert good Buddhists" because the two religions are merely different ways of going towards the "Beyond." This doctrine of "Universalism" is also an error in Smart's conception of the Mission of the Church.

Invariably, the Christian idea of the "Beyond" is different from the Buddhist meaning of Emptiness (*sunyata*). It is not a contradiction of terms to say that the Christian "self-emptying" is for fullness. Self emptying by Christ is not understood in terms of "negating" of his personality but in terms of voluntary offering himself (his personality) in its fullness to be sacrificed for the good of humanity. By so doing, the human race enjoys a "Beyond" which is full of the love of God. To be a Christian is to be full of Christ's life.

In the same vein, W. Cantwell Smith is against the Church's mission to "people of other faiths". To him, the exclusivist attitude breeds the notion of converting others. Christian exclusivist attitude should therefore stop as it nurses unnecessary spiritual pride and the urge to convert others. He believes that a theology of comparative religion will soon emerge and will probably fall along the path of mysticism, although he is not specific on what its content

might be. To Smith, we shall meanwhile be content with being either good Christians or good Buddhists, etc. This is another wrong view based on misunderstanding of the mission of the Church. Universalism has its own problems.

The above summary of the three scholars' stand against exclusivism does not exhaust what has earlier been said of it by theologians and historians. Although people who love and take seriously the mission of Church to "people of other faiths" might not endorse exclusivism, they would on the other hand reject the radical stance of Hick, Smart and Smith which destroys the Church itself.

Exclusivism and Racism

Although the three radical scholars who are opposed to exclusivism deny that the Church has a mission to the world, it is necessary to point out that one other danger of radical exclusivism is "racism." It may be its root. In other words, some traces of religious exclusivism may manifest themselves in "racial discrimination." Some notion of religious exclusivism may be a by-product of racial pride. The nineteenth century churchman in England saw himself as the only possessor of the true knowledge of God. The Spirit of Enlightenment had dawned on him while the "pagans" and

adherents of other religions afar off were still benighted and groped in the dark. The Victorian English churchman, believing that Europe had reached the apogee of human development in culture, religion and science, felt morally obliged to spread the same to those in "utter darkness and ignorance." In a subtle way, the missionary attitude to "other religions" became rooted in "Darwinism" with a moral imperative and assumption of duty towards the "heathens" who groped in the dark. This view was christened the Whiteman's Burden or Manifest Destiny to spread the whiteman's religion, learning and civilization. With this undergirding presupposition, any other form of religion beside theirs was considered "primitive", idolatrous, inferior and should be replaced forcefully in order to "save" the souls of the adherents of those religions. Many missionaries worked with this illusion for a long time. Thus the missionaries' image of non-Europeans, along with the pseudo-scientific arguments for racial superiority, produced an arrogant superiority complex. This was however diametrically opposed to the biblical view of mission (Matt. 28:19ff.). Their attitude toward other cultures and religious systems was characterized by culture-shock, religious exclusivism and racial pride. Missionary iconoclasm

became a feature of evangelism in the field. This negative attitude to other cultures did not bear lasting fruit in the mission fields, especially in the Third World nations of Africa.

By the turn of the century, it became clear to some missionaries that their predecessors had committed some grievous errors by not seeking to understand the cultural and religious systems in their areas of operation before trying to "declare their obituary." Therefore, following the gradual but steady change in the pattern of Christian theology in Europe, some Christian writers developed a new attitude toward the "other religions" in missionary lands. Their perception of non-Christian religions consequently became subsumed in the Church's realization of the world's rich cultural diversity and her awareness that she can no more be a "Western" Church than she could ever have remained a Jewish Church; various missionary bodies gradually change their previous hostile attitudes and policies towards "non-Christian religions". In spite of this more favorable view, the old view of Christians toward "other religions" prevailed and kept some Christians still withdrawn from non-Christians.

From the 1930's, many European Christian missions (especially in Africa) who realized the errors of the early European missionaries and imperialists

in attempting to destroy the traditional cultures and religions, intensified efforts to investigate how some features of traditionalism could be used as the means to propagate the Gospel. Their studies of the traditional languages, cultures and religions therefore took a *praeparatio-evangelica* approach.

This evangelical zeal was manifested in several works that appeared at the time particularly in the writings of eminent missiologists like Professor Hendrick Kraemer. In suggesting ways of communicating the Gospel to people of non-Christian religious background, Kraemer emphasized to the Protestant missionary bodies what he described as the "principles of continuity and discontinuity" with non-Christian elements in mission areas of operation.

In the recent past, even before the devastating criticisms of Hick and his friends on exclusivism, a change of attitude towards other religions has gained currency in the theological debates of the Church. The new shift of emphasis is no longer on the "Church" or on "Christ" but on "God" as the basis of salvation. Thus the history of the attitude of the Catholic Church toward other religions seems to have moved progressively from its previous dogmatic **Ecclesiocentrism** to a less rigid principle of **Christocentrism** and most recently to a broad-based concept of **Theocentrism**.

The Vatican II (1962-65) continued the exclusive ecclesiocentrism of the period which held that there was no salvation outside the Church (i.e. Roman Catholic church). Yet the Council Fathers, while reaffirming that the Church (Catholic) was necessary for salvation, extended as it were the universal possibility of salvation - stating that even atheists could be saved. The view was initially articulated by Karl Rahner, a radical Catholic theologian whose thought strongly influenced the deliberations of the Council. His shift from "Ecclesiocentrism" to "Christocentrism" made him conclude that other non-Christian religions are or can be grace-filled ways of salvation and are positively included in God's plans of salvation. Rahner and Kung (another Catholic theologian) have strongly tried to change the Catholic dogma on this principle of exclusivism. Originally promulgated at the Council of Florence in 1438-45, it states that "no one remaining outside the Catholic Church can become partakers of eternal life: but they will go to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before the end of life, they are joined to the Church." Rahner puts forward his idea of the "anonymous" Christian in his attempt to alter the exclusivist notion of "Ecclesiocentrism". His colleague,

Kung, speaks of "ordinary" (world religions) and the "extra-ordinary" (Catholic Church) ways of salvation implying that both the Catholic Church and other non-Christian religions are viable ways to salvation.

These new attitudes have culminated in a phenomenon we now call "dialogue." The term was made known to the Church by Pope Paul VI in the encyclical, *Ecclesia Suam* (6th August, 1964). As an institutional sign of this desire to meet and relate to the followers of other religious traditions of the world, the Holy Father began on Pentecost 1964 in the spirit of Vatican II, the Secretariat for Non-Christians, different from the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization of People. The World Council of Churches has in the same vein started a sub-unit for dialogue with people of "Living Faiths and Ideologies." It is believed that the recent radical theological views by the Roman Catholic Church of other non-Christian religions and cultures and the concept of dialogue, are evidences of her clear understanding of the magnitude of her mission to a fast changing world.

Religious Exclusivism and the Mission of the Church

The stand of Hick and his two friends (and any other person who shares their

views for that matter) is anti-mission. Although an "inclusivist stance" that leads to "universalism" is also counterproductive in mission, no one would ever endorse the idea of a Church that should not evangelize or should accept that "all religions are one". It is sheer reductionism.

Considering some more positive grounds against exclusivism, the mission of the Church to people of all tongues and cultures can be undertaken in the strict biblical sense. This brings us to focus on the **Theology of Incarnation**. The fundamentalists who oppose interaction through dialogue or the current proposals for "Inculturation" may end up with isolating or "writing off" non-Christian religions and thereby failing to evangelize them. Not all processes of interaction can be described as "inclusivism" or liberalism.

It has to be re-emphasized that Christianity is a **Transcendental** faith which is not culture-bound. It is supracultural and does not reject any culture but can manifest itself through every culture by refining, purifying and reforming it, in order to "Christianize" it. It is through such contacts that the Gospel message could be put across meaningfully to people of "other faiths and ideologies." The Lord Jesus who is the Lord of the Universe wants his Gospel to get to every land and "incarnate" itself contextually in all

cultures without special preference to any. It must be mentioned here that in the incarnation, Jesus refused to appear to man as pure, refined Word but as *Word Incarnate*. In trying to understand Christ as the Universal Lord in all cultures and at the same time maintain the uniqueness of the Church, it must be stated that it is **only Jesus** that is universal in an absolute sense. All other confessions which people make of Him are influenced by many variables of culture, language, temperament, etc. It is only through contact with others that the Gospel can get through to people. A Christian who abhors others and keeps aloof to maintain his purity is not the biblical Christian but a "ghetto" religious fanatic.

Another unique feature of Christianity is its **incarnational and transcendental nature**. It is not a "traditional" or "national" religion of any particular country or society. Neither was it designed to save any particular race. This is one of the facts that Hick forgot. He had stated that it was geographical isolation of territories which made it difficult to unite such Eastern Religions like Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism. Except perhaps Buddhism among the above religions which began around 6th and 7th centuries B.C., others were **national**

cults which were confined to their geographical locations. No one was converted into them. People were born into them, although outside enquirers might be admitted without full membership into the cult. Since one belonged to such faiths by birth, it was unreasonable and unnecessary to convert anyone into them; they were not "missionary religions" per se.

On the contrary, Christianity is not a "national religion." It is catholic in the sense of universal and this makes it imperative for all its adherents to preach and plant it in all cultures and nations at all times. Invariably, Christianity contends with any existing religious system wherever it finds itself. It faces persecution from the "host" religion which sees it as an "intruder." For instance it had to contend with animism, polytheism and thorough Emperor-pagan Worship (at one time) in the Graeco-Roman World. In Europe, it also had to fight its way through paganism and atheism of the Dark Ages. Earlier on, Judaism which was its "first chief Host" became its chief enemy when its Christian characteristics became obvious. When it was evident that Christianity was not just a sect of Judaism, zealous Jews persecuted it without relenting. In Africa, the traditional religion of the people did not welcome Christianity which it saw as a foe. We can therefore

see that the transcendental nature of Christianity makes it imperative for the church to propagate it everywhere. No one should claim a "natural" right to it. No one should monopolize or hijack it. This is where exclusivism cannot help in achieving the goals of Christianity as a "world-religion" in a pluralistic society. Nor could inclusivism fulfill the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19.

In the Christian context, the term *Gospel* is the "Good News that God has in Jesus Christ fulfilled his promises to Israel, that a way of salvation has been opened to all." Thus, the Gospel was not understood as the statement of a propositional truth that was taught but rather the proclamation of a fact that is announced by God. An exclusivist in a "ghetto" cannot proclaim the Good News unless he goes out to do so. An "inclusivist" who does not understand the unique nature of the faith, also cannot proclaim it without adulterating it.

One should, however, decipher the difference between the **Person of Christ** and the **Proclamation** of same to others. One is the ontological Truth in itself, while the other is the process of making some thing known. This raises the problem of communicating any "pure Gospel" (in the process of proclamation) totally disentangled from human activity and experience. The idea of keeping Christianity out of other

human experience is unrealistic. The difficulty in identifying such a "pure Gospel" that is completely disentangled from any form of human experience and activity presupposes the communicator using a "culture." Christianity gets hold of a "cultural pattern" and proclaims the Gospel through it. Neither exclusivism nor inclusivism therefore can hold onto the claim of communicating a pure Gospel.

Conclusion

In this brief essay, we have discarded John Hick's reasons for rejecting Christian exclusivism. We have also rejected Ninian Smart's and W. Cantwell-Smith views because they do not portray Christianity as a unique faith. Although the paper rejects inclusivism totally, it does not in any way regard Christianity as one of "the world religions" in the sense that it can be classified as one of many viable means of searching for and finding the Ultimate Reality. Liberalism and inclusivism are of course discounted since neither portrays the Christian faith in its unique salvific nature. Any theological or ideological stance which negates or relegates the mission of the Church to a secondary place, should not be considered as professing an authentic Christian faith.

The old debate on the relationship between Christianity and other religions

will continue to recur in every generation. This is because each generation must discover the Christ for itself. In our own contemporary world, a "ghetto Church" or an "inclusivist church" that ignores the uniqueness of Christianity cannot propagate the Living Christ. Neither liberal inclusivism nor dogmatic and blind exclusivism can propagate the "changeless Gospel to a fast changing world." The withdrawn Christian should respond to the challenge thrown out by Hick and his friends. If we reject Christian Exclusivism or Inclusivism what do we accept?

If we are sincere with the current idea of "Inculturation of the Gospel", the exclusivist stance of many fundamentalists is obviously not going to help the Church in her mission to the world. The liberal and radical inclusivist stance of Hick, Smart and Smith on the other hand repudiates the very existence of the Church as a separate institution. Therefore in an attempt to preach the Gospel to people in a multi-faith situation, a process of **selection, purification and redemption** of the basic cultural elements for effective evangelism, must be made. This will check the danger of reversion to paganism or syncretism in the Church, a problem which radical inclusivism poses. This is where prayers can work. God will reveal

through his Holy Spirit the perfect way to his Church.

One obvious factor is that it is difficult to check the interaction of a Christian with people of different religious beliefs because of free movement of people in the world. We should realize our mission to them at all times and in all places. Because of this new development, our strategy of mission should never remain static but dynamic and completely dependent on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Evangelicalism and African Christian Theology

Augustine C. Musopole

The idea to write on this subject has been with me for some time now, but its urgency was brought about by the reading of Richard Gehman's book, *Doing African Christian Theology: An Evangelical Perspective*. However, it is one thing to have a thought and quite another to put it on paper in order to share it with a larger public, so the thought remained latent until I read a review of the book by Ernst Wendland in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 11.1, 1992. In the review, Wendland stated, "I would now like to see an African response to this material, specifically with respect to Gehman's criticism and assessment of the current state of African Christian theology (ACT), and also in response to his proposals for setting the situation right by restoring the basis for Christian theologizing in African to a more solidly biblical foundation." My initial intention to write was prompted by the important and courageous effort the book was attempting in determining the foundations for an ACT that was true

to scriptures and the Gospel, and by actually mapping out a method for achieving this. There were also things which I considered serious omissions in Gehman's consideration of a viable biblically based ACT.

Gehman's Contribution to ACT

Most of the things that Richard Gehman has said in his book are not new. They have been articulated many times by African evangelical Christians at conferences, in books, *Afroscope*, and various journals. The concerns that he raises are not new either. The late Byang Kato articulated them vehemently when he was in office as General Secretary of AEAM [now the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, AEA], and his successor Dr. Tukurunboh Adeyemo has continued to do the same. The only new thing in his book is the proposed method for doing ACT from an evangelical perspective. Richard Gehman is to be commended, especially as a missionary, for recognizing and appreciating the need for an African

Christian Théology. While evangelicals in Africa have raised concerns about ACT and have responded to the perceived "theological pitfalls" through their published and unpublished works, and the establishment of two graduate schools of theology, at best they have simply reacted negatively and are not doing much theologizing that takes the African context seriously as does Dr. Gehman. One book which attempts to do this is Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*, (Ghana: African Christian Press, 1973). The African evangelical theologians have left it to the so-called "liberals" in African universities departments of religious studies to carry on the task of contextualizing theology in Africa. Some of these scholars have no intention of adopting an evangelical perspective as a matter of commitment. Therefore, it is refreshing to find one who is concerned for the effective presence of an African evangelical theology as the mainstream theology in Africa.

Richard Gehman is to be further commended for realizing that imported theologies are not totally relevant to the African situation. He states, "To depend upon theological conclusions of another generation without seeking out the truth for oneself is to eat stale bread without proper nourishment." This means that even western evangelicalism

must come under the scrutiny of African evangelical theologians in their effort to make their theology relevant to the African context. It will be important to engage the hermeneutic of "new thinking" to avoid using stale theological bread and run the danger of "theological sickness" resulting in a nauseating or poisoned spirituality.

The criticism that Richard Gehman brings to bear on a select group of African theologians is not new. As he himself acknowledges, Byang Kato recognized the dangers and warned the African Church, especially its evangelical wing, in a way that was forthright and aggressive like an angry mother hen defending its chicks. While Byang Kato reacted most strongly to what he called incipient universalism arising out of perceived theological liberalism, John Mbiti, one of those attacked by Kato, has been critical of the lack of biblical usage in African theology. He has actually written a book to demonstrate how the Bible has to be used in the creation of contextual theology. It is wonderful to see more voices being added in addressing what is perceived to be a serious deficiency in the doing of African theology. What is needed is more evangelicals doing more biblically based African theologies by engaging in rigorous dialogue with all shades of theologies, and not simply decrying the fact that the so-called

"liberals" are not taking the Bible seriously. The counter charge is that evangelicals do not take either the context of the Bible or of the African believer seriously. The Bible is used as if it were a book of spiritual theorems that are applicable everywhere regardless of the cultural, social, economic, and political context.

One thing that needs to be acknowledged is that there is abuse (misuse, underuse, overuse) of the Bible by both "conservative" and "liberal" believers. I have put the terms conservative and liberal in quotes because their applicability in the African context is questionable. There is a tendency among those holding to what Gehman calls a high view of scripture to dehistoricize the Bible and to disengage it from living reality. It is called the over-spiritualization syndrome. The result is a people who live in a spiritualized world, but do not know how that world relates positively to their cultural context except through some negative attitudes. On the other end is the tendency to so historicize the scriptures as to deny its divine role as bearer of and witness to the divine Word, and the result is a sociology of religion and not theology, while spirituality is reduced to psycho-social well being. If African evangelicalism is to contribute to the correction of the situation, then it has to avoid these two

extremes. It seems to me that a dialogue within the African Church of theologians and lay people, and the sharing of their testimonies to the reality of God in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is one way to avoid these abuses. This is also the way in which the African church can have a homegrown theology and not depend on stale theologies from elsewhere.

The emphasis that Gehman places on the doing of theology as a task of the whole church is most welcome, and especially the suggestion of a method that can make this happen. The tragedy of the African churches, of all theological complexions, is that very few, if any, have produced a confession in response to the question, What does it mean to be the church of God in Africa in the second half of the 20th century and beyond? The European churches emerged into their own particular identities by the confessions that they formulated in response to the theological challenges of their day. By inheriting these confessions, African evangelicalism has become unwittingly captive to western reformed scholastic theology. Without African-generated confession by the churches, the selfhood of the church will be impossible to realize. It can only be hoped that those who engage in theological discourse and writing are doing so out of their deep

commitment to and their love for the church in Africa and not simply out of intellectual curiosity and gamesmanship. The method advocated by Gehman will help, one hopes, to bring into the discourse both pastors and lay people and thus spread theological awareness far afield, rather than leave it to university and seminary professors. Having said this, it has to be acknowledged that it has been the nature of theological reflection that certain individuals contribute more than most. We have the example of Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, the Hodges, Mafhen, Barth, Tillich, Stott, Schaefer, Mbiti, Kato and many more. Individual contribution needs to be encouraged even as the churches set up theology work groups. It is hoped that these work groups will involve scholars who are already working in academic institutions. I do hope that many churches will take theology as seriously as they take evangelism, because they are two sides of the same coin. Perhaps if the missionaries had allowed the churches to do this from the very beginning as part of the selfhood of the church, some denominational splits might have been avoided.

Troubling Aspects of Gehman's Position

(a) *Presuppositions*

There are certain things which I find troubling in Gehman's book because many of his assumptions are not stated and clarified. The first problem is that he has failed to follow his own observation that "the colonial context did not provide that encouragement to allow the Christian nationals to arrive at their own conclusions." Specifically it should be said that it was the missionaries who failed to permit African nationals to reach their own theological conclusions. Evangelicalism as a theological movement is not a product of Africa. It is a theological position which developed outside of Africa and was introduced to Africa as a new battlefield in the theological wars that had been raging in Europe and America for a long time between liberalism and conservatism in response to the Enlightenment. There is a history to the development of the evangelical movement in the West and in Africa. Within Africa there is need for a very clear distinction to be made between evangelicalism as the theological movement and the Evangel of Jesus Christ who is God's power and wisdom unto salvation. Even though the two might not be separated, they need to be

distinguished. The Evangel is primary and African evangelicalism is the tool of the Evangel and not the other way round. Without this distinction, it is easy to mix the two and to make the tool become the reality. It needs to be made clear here that the Evangel is none other than Jesus himself and not simply words about Jesus. Evangelicalism is historically an intellectual and theological movement which is contextual in character. Only the Evangel as the application of the reality of Jesus, the Christ, to sinful humanity is theologically universal. American evangelicalism or European evangelicalism or Asian evangelicalism can never be transferred to Africa, lock, stock and barrel, and be totally adequate for the African context. It is out of the incarnation of the Evangel within a cultural, sociological, and historical context that a local evangelical theology emerges. This distinction is not clear in Gehman's book. It is a distortion to confuse the means and the ends. It is simply assumed that evangelicalism as a theological system is universally applicable. Evangelicalism is only a means, but not the end, while Jesus as the Evangel is both the means and the end. It is the reality of Jesus in the lives and culture of Africans and as their way of salvation, and everything else following from this that makes African

Christian experience evangelical. Thanks be to God that He works in spite of our methods and systems.

(b) The role of Scripture

Following from this failure to clarify his assumptions is Gehman's position on Scripture. A further distinction needs to be drawn between a theology of the Bible and biblical theology. These two are not the same even though they imply each other. As it has been stated above the Bible has been abused by both conservative and liberal scholars because of the questions and presuppositions they bring to it and the attitudes with which they approach it. The theology of the Bible is what is said about the theological status of the Bible as to its message, authority, and authenticity; and Biblical theology is what the Bible teaches about God's relationship to humanity and all creation. This distinction is not clear in the book. What is disturbing is that, contrary to his method, the position that Gehman adopts regarding the Bible did not come out of his theological study group in Africa. In his guidelines, the first proposal on presuppositions which has to do with what is normative in theology is spelled out before a theological task force which will then state its presuppositions. Why do this critical work for them? Though Gehman might be right in what he has

said in his first proposition, he seems to be imposing a ready-made view on the African church. Somehow he seems not to trust the African church to come up with the right assumptions related to the theology of the Bible. The African people love and read their Bibles, and are capable of saying why they have to obey the Bible instead of other authorities. The view of biblical authority that Gehman presents is a statement out of the theological battles of Europe and America concerned with infallibility and inerrancy which arose out of the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. The African church has not talked about "inerrancy and infallibility" as yet, and there are other more pressing theological matters.

It is, therefore, interesting to note that while Gehman is willing to let the local church deal with the practical issues, he takes upon himself the responsibility of delineating the position that they need to take on the Bible as our authority. I think the African church should be left to determine what it thinks about the Bible as with any other problem that confronts it. For Gehman to define the theology of the Bible for the African Church is to act paternalistically. Without the African Christians establishing their own biblical foundation, an African evangelical theology will never emerge. We need to note here that Gehman's

position is a product of an epistemology which may not be biblical. Western evangelicalism shares to a large extent this rationalistic epistemological heritage with liberal theology, and it is this epistemology which has given rise to some theological problems and the resulting evangelical apologetics. The African church will have to deal with their epistemology in an effort to develop a theology of the Bible.

Is African evangelicalism right to insist on Scripture as the "final authority in matter of faith and conduct?" Is this not to put the vehicle in the place of the reality being conveyed by it? Jesus promised his disciples the Spirit of truth to lead them into all the truth and to bring to remembrance all the things that he had said. Jesus promised his presence to be with them to the end of the age. Jesus, the Word that is God, is the final authority in matters of faith and conduct and is the one who authenticates the scriptures and draws out their intention. The authority of the Bible is derived authority because it points to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith according to the writer to the Hebrews. Jesus told the Pharisees that they look to scripture for salvation, and yet they bear witness to him.

The question of authority comes from the dual needs for both a teaching

church and for a context for an African theology to develop. Yet, the Jerusalem Council remind us that biblical modification may be forced on Scripture because it has pleased the Holy Spirit and the African church to make appropriate changes to certain practices because Christ has made them clean. Pastoral letters cannot be used as proof texts without proper exegetical work, indeed as Gehman proposes, but in some cases fails to do in his book. Questions need to be asked as to what is the problem that led the apostles to place the emphasis on the need for "all scriptures". It needs to be remembered also that when those letters were being written, they were not yet part of the recognized canon, and so the scripture they refer to was the Old Testament. The epistles were important because of their apostolic authorship which the early church used to establish the canon. The repetition of doctrinal clichés that have come out of varied historical situations may or may not be helpful. African Christians need to find answers for themselves and this calls for a testing of all theological spirits to find out whether they are of Christ and relevant to the African context.

(c) The Dangers of Epistemological Captivity

It has already been pointed out that evangelicalism as arising from the West

has been shaped by an epistemological approach which is not simply evangelical, but Aristotelian in orientation and the result is a scholastic theology filled with paradoxes and dualisms. We have inherited that epistemological conditioning in Africa and there is need to recognize it for what it is: limited and inadequate for understanding both traditional African and Christian spirituality. African cultures that never recognized the dichotomy between matter and spirit, as the Greeks did, are much closer to the biblical epistemology based on the wisdom of God than Western evangelicalism steeped in rationalistic categories. Gehman seems to recognize this when he speaks on culture and the need for contextualization, but for the wrong reason. Western evangelical theology is caught in the same rationalistic trappings and reaction to philosophy and culture. This is why Gehman speaks about universal and propositional truths. Africans and the Bible have more ways of communicating truth than simply the propositional way which is more a legacy of Aristotelian syllogisms than biblical wisdom that uses narrative, prose, proverbs, ritual, symbols, parables and poetry. The truth of the Bible is captured better as the whole of being is tuned to God in a personal relationship and obedience, and not only

and simply by assenting to the truth of some statements, a method that has a tendency of freezing the truth and thus killing the life which it is supposed to convey.

The terms liberal and conservative need to be explained instead of being bandied around as if they were opposites. Unfortunately, the history of the usage of these terms have created this impression and led to their polarization. There are some things that need to be conserved, and there are other things that must change (become liberated). Change can be directed or it can be forced on a community. While confessions do not change, people do change and either outgrow or become fatigued by some issues. It may also be the case that some issues become irrelevant to the community or are overtaken by other events in the community. Therefore, there is the need for each generation to rethink the faith for itself in view of changed situations. While Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever, the scriptures need to be interpreted afresh. In any society, there will be people who are always questioning the past and seeking to change it because it is in the way of new possibilities, just as there will always be people that work to conserve the past because the present and its meaning are rooted in it. What is required, is not to favor one or the

other, but rather to show wisdom and responsibility toward both. We cannot be beneficiaries of liberalism in some areas of our life and then vilify it as if it were the enemy without playing the hypocrite. Both theological perspectives have been hurtful to the African people. While liberal theologies encouraged colonialism, conservative theologies supported racism and still do to this day. Many of us would like to be set free from certain customs, traditions, and attitudes, while to conserve them would mean remaining prisoners of a past no longer necessary for the meaning of our present existence. ACT need not be either liberal or conservative, but theologically responsive to the reality of Jesus in the lives of African believers. To achieve this, it will have to be biblically based by use of adequate hermeneutic tools, contextually relevant in the problems it engages, culturally sensitive (but not captive) in its attempt to express the presence and meaning of the incarnate Christ. Furthermore, when we talk of liberalism in Africa and in ACT, we need to put it in its historical context, remembering that it was a reaction against a kind of obscurant spiritual authoritarianism that had grown out of a polemical situation following the Reformation. Theology is more than a science, it is an exercise in kinship with

God, the study of God. While it does not negate the use of reason as a tool, it recognizes its limitation because reason alone cannot understand both scripture and the power of God. Faith is not a leap into the dark, as Kierkegaard would have us believe, but out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Faith is reasonable and reason is faithbound, otherwise it has no grounds for confidence. The fact that rationalism has made claims beyond its own limits is no reason to vilify it, nor should it force theology to confine itself to its canons. It is as much a gift of God as faith, love, and hope are, but we know that love is the greatest and not reason. African evangelicals need to explore more this matter of love as related to God's wisdom as a possible epistemological point of departure for doing theology. Conservatives have tended to be narrow in their perspective because they do not take the whole existential and historical reality of our humanity in view, while liberals have tended to move to the other extreme in which anything and everything goes. For liberals a theological perspective governs the reality of God, and not God determining the perspective. What the African church needs is not an obscurant evangelicalism, but an African evangelical theology based on the love, wisdom, and power of God (and that is who Jesus is) and

theologians who embody that reality (doers of the word), which is, "Jesus in you, the hope of glory." For the African church, there is theological danger lurking in both liberal and conservative perspectives and African evangelicals need to watch both sides cautiously.

(d) *Living the Whole Truth*

The insistence by evangelicals that theology is a community effort is meant to provide for internal and mutual correction under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the authority of the truth that we want, not of people's intellect or sectarian propositions. It is the truth that sets free and our loyalty should be to that truth as embodied and manifested in Christ and not simply to some confessional statements which soon become dead letters of the law. Hans Kung has advocated a church maintained in truth, and not on tradition--catholic or evangelical (I would highly recommend his little book to anyone concerned for evangelical theological orthodoxy and the church). We can only maintain an evangelical tradition because it upholds the truth as the church presently knows it and seeks to grow in it by embodying it. Therefore, doctrinal claims to biblical truth that have been developed elsewhere must come under scrutiny in the light of our unique experience of

Jesus Christ and historico-cultural context. Richard Gehman has put priority on "the spiritual renewal among the churches and building up the Kingdom of God." While I would applaud this emphasis, it is narrowly focused. It suffers from a Hellenistic dualism. There is the need for an African evangelical theology to be historically engaged. It is the whole gospel, to the whole person, in the totality of their culture, and for the whole world. It is the life of people that we should talk about, and not simply their souls or spirits. Until African people see the relevance of the Evangel to the redemption of their lives and culture, spiritual renewal will be ineffective. Social responsibility and evangelism are not alternatives, but each imply the other. African evangelicals need to emphasize both especially in view of Africa's cultural emphasis on communal living. The concern should be how can the Evangel contribute toward the creation of communities of freedom, peace, integrity and abundant life in Africa.

(e) The Need for the Whole Tool-Box for Biblical Exegesis

On the need for thorough biblical exegesis, Gehman has a point, but his tools are inadequate and so is the epistemological basis on which his argument rests. Evangelicals can use

all tools of biblical criticism and come to very different understanding from the liberals because their epistemology is different and their approach arises out of a personal relationship with the subject of the Word thus allowing for enlightened and informed subjectivity within the community of faith in theological discourse. While the Bible is significant due to Israel's election to be God's servant in mission to the world, the question of where was God before the Gospel reached Africa is critical to an African evangelical theology and it impinges on soteriology as well as the theological status of the ancestors. To bring in God from African traditional religion (ATR) is not to engage in natural theology because Africans do not recognize such a theology. If it has something to do with the God who is creator, then it is valid theology. Natural theology is a Hellenistic creation and deals with God who is a concept to be intellectually demonstrated or proved and not as a Being to relate to personally. To speak of God from ATR is not to substitute ATR for the Old Testament, but to understand and appreciate ATR better in the light of the Scriptures, hence Gehman is on target to advocate a theology of culture. The fact that there is an interplay between divine revelation and human progress through time in view of God's promised future implies

that there will have to be an interplay between biblical traditions and African religio-cultural traditions in discerning the meaning of God's word for Africa today. The Bible as a norm is not fixed or static, but rather creatively and incarnationally living and unfolding as applied by the Holy Spirit. It can only be fixed and inflexible if applied rationally.

bread called African evangelical/Christian theology.

Conclusion

I have attempted in a general way to highlight some of the issues that I consider critical in the development of African evangelicalism as mainstream African Christian theology. It is imperative that apart from the experience of Jesus as Savior and Lord, any theology that has come from outside has to be examined critically in the light of the Scriptures, as understood by the African community of faith, if it can make a positive contribution to the development of African Christian Theology under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The African church as a living reality cannot continue to live, as Gehman has rightly said, on stale theological bread without getting spiritually malnourished in the process. In many ways, it has been sick for a long time, and it is time to give to it some fresh homemade

Being a Christian in an Immoral Society

Eunice Kamaara

Morality refers to that code of conduct which governs the way people should behave in relation to one another. In this sense, morality is a social enterprise.¹ In our human society today where such immoral actions as crime and violence are so common that they are almost acceptable, one wonders whether it is worthwhile attempting to be moral at all. In Kenya, for instance, social evils such as rape, robbery, sexual promiscuity, and murder are common features of social life. Yet about seventy-five percent of the country's population claim to be followers of Christianity - a religion whose basic moral teaching is obedience to the ten commandments and love for one's fellow men. This paper aims at a critical analysis of the need for Christians to be moral while living in an immoral society; in biblical language, the need for Christians to live in the world without being of the world. Basing her discussion on personal experience and the experience and reflection of others, this writer presents

various rationales for why Christians ought to be moral.

The major question which the paper addresses is this: what rational justifications do Christians have for being moral in the context of our immoral society? Any attempt to answer this question implies agreement with Louis Pojman in his assertion that "...the choice of the moral point of view is not an arbitrary choice but a rational one."² Morality is not without rationality since rationality is part of human nature. Rationality is so natural to man that even when he refuses to apply reason at a particular time in his life he has a reason as to why not. Man³ is a thinking being who is aware that he/she is aware.

The first section of this paper presents various reasons why people ought to be moral with particular emphasis on Christians. Thereafter special attention is given to how Christians may remain moral in spite of the immorality of the society in which they live.

Why be Moral?

Generally, people should be moral because they are social beings. This means that people cannot live on their own. The helplessness of human babies, for instance, requires that they be born within a society if they are to survive at all. This social being of man calls for morality since:

The conditions for a satisfactory human life for people living in groups hardly obtain otherwise. The alternative would seem to be either a state of nature in which all or most of us would be worse off than we are, even if Hobbs is wrong in thinking that life in such a state would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"; or levithian civil state more totalitarian than any yet dreamed of.⁴

A description of what a state of nature would be is clearly presented by Pojman in his reflection on *Lord of the Flies*.⁵

According to a renowned moral philosopher who lived in the twentieth century, Immanuel Kant, morality "is a jewel that shines on its own light". By this, Kant seem to have meant that morality is desirable even where its

effects on social relationships are absent. This assertion is inadequate in view of the social enterprise of morality. Morality is so heavily dependent on social relationships that it is not possible to perceive it on its own. Morality shines only in its reflection on the relationship between human beings. If an individual person was to live in isolation from other people, it would not matter whether he/she were moral or not. Just as Bauer argues: "...outside society, people have no reason for following such rules, that is for being moral. In other words, outside society, the very distinction between right and wrong vanishes."

The Christian God is a God of order. Christians are bestowed with the responsibility of maintaining order as the guardians of God's creation. St. Paul the apostle, writing to the Corinthians on order in church noted "...God does not want us to be in disorder but in harmony and peace."⁶ This applies to all spheres of Christians living. Christian scriptures have a lot to say on orderliness in life, giving support for moral social living.

People should be moral because they are naturally egoistic and it is to their own advantage that they be moral. Let me explain. For me to pursue my interests, it is necessary that there be some order in society. Although some immoral actions appear to be in my

self-interest, they may not really be so. For instance, it may appear to be in my interest to cheat in my final year undergraduate degree coursework examination since I will then pass without working hard. But since there is a possibility of being caught cheating in the examinations the result of which would be suspension or even expulsion, cheating may not be to my interest at all. The implication of this argument is that "...it may be in one's interest not to follow one's interest at times."⁷ It is with this in mind that it may be argued that it is always, in the end, to our own interest that we have a sense of moral obligations.⁸ In other words, we act moral because under any other conditions our desires would on the whole be less gratified.⁹

Nevertheless, egoism is not sufficient justification for being moral. This is because sometimes we may be sure of getting away with an immoral act.¹⁰ For instance, supposing I was sure of cheating in examinations without getting caught? Or take another example: supposing I was alone and I found a dead person with a million shillings in his pocket. If I could take the money without anybody getting to know about it would I be morally justified?

Christian ethics become valid here because that morality may not be reduced to egoism. God made man in

His own image.¹¹ This points at the dignity of man which he/she ought to preserve at all times. This calls for man to be moral all the time, irrespective of whether others are moral or not.

Man also possesses a sense of duty. It is generally agreed that killing another person is morally wrong. But supposing I am attacked by a murderer who threatens to kill me. If I have a gun and I shoot him before he kills me, would I be morally justified? I will be in the right because I will have acted in self-defence. I will not only have acted in self-interest but also from a sense of duty: I have a moral obligation to defend myself just as much as I would any innocent bystander. To do otherwise would be to commit suicide. In such a case, it is contrary to reason to refrain from shooting the man.

According to Joseph Butler, "There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions." This is the reflective principle of conscience. He held that it cannot be refuted that all men are endowed with conscience. While it cannot be empirically proved that all men have conscience, this cannot be refuted. How else would one explain why people confess to certain immoral actions when nobody would have suspected them? Conscience enables man to wish to be moral all the time. To one great

thinker, Socrates, being moral makes us be in harmony with our inner soul, while immorality corrupts the inner soul; virtue purifies it.¹²

Christians should be moral because they profess and believe in a religion which emphasizes love as the highest virtue. It is the duty of every religious man to act morally towards his fellow men since for all who believe in God, man has a transcendental perspective. Reinhold Niebuhr discussed this perspective thus:

...your neighbour is a son of God and God may be served by serving him, "What ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me".¹³

Religions demand that man subjects his individual will to the divine will. It is the divine will that we love our neighbours as we love ourselves. The desire to subject individual will to the divine will is, it seems to me, strengthened by the millennial hope which prevails in various religious traditions. In Christianity, for example, the idea that those who lead immoral lives on earth will be punished eternally in hell while those who lead moral lives will be rewarded in heaven is advanced. I do appreciate that this argument does not hold any weight for those who do not believe in God and in life after

death. Personally, I believe in both and wish to promote a way of playing it safe as proposed by Pascal's famous Wager. Pascal argued that the only safe course for man is to believe in God. If there is no God, it won't make any difference once he (man) dies. But if there is God, then he will be in safe hands.

Finally, it seems that people ought to be moral because other people are moral to at least some extent. If others are completely immoral, nobody would have any reason to be moral. Pojman enumerates four related purposes of morality, namely,

- i) to keep society from falling apart.
- ii) to eliminate human suffering.
- iii) to promote human flourishing
- iv) to solve conflicts of interests in just ways.¹⁴

If I were the only one who were moral, none of the above functions would pertain. In the end all men would be in conflict with each other, in which case my being moral would serve no purpose. As long as the society is moral to any significant degree, people should be moral.

In the world today, a significant population are Christians. If only these could all behave morally, everyone else would have little reason not to also be moral. The human race would flourish with minimal suffering and conflicts of interests would be solved in just ways.

How to be Moral

The sole source of guidance on Christian living is the Bible. The whole biblical teaching may be summed up in one single rule "Love your Neighbour as you love yourself." In our world where even the common form of decency is lacking, it may be difficult to apply this maxim but this does not make it impossible.

First and foremost, Christians ought to reconsider their role in their society as the 'salt of the earth'. The true Christian should not join the world's bandwagon in whatever circumstances because in so doing he/she fails in his/her role model as an example to others. Jesus Christ lived in a society that was no less corrupt than our own. The hypocrisy exhibited by the Pharisees, the lawlessness displayed by the Zealots as well as the harsh and cruel rule of the Roman emperors have parallels in our world. Like Jesus, Christians are called to correct this by rebuking hypocrisy, initiating civil obedience and condemning cruel leadership. Jesus presents a perfect example to Christians in our immoral society. Moral action is therefore the first and most important duty of Christians in their societies. A priest in my local church is never tired of preaching love. He says if you want to see God, look at your

neighbour. This implies that all are made in the image of God and to love God is to love one's neighbour. As has been noted, this is the whole of a Christian's moral duty. With the proportion of Christians so high in our population as we have today, if this maxim of love was to be followed, there would be a lot more peace and security in the world. With love for one's neighbour, one would not burn his house, steal his cattle, fail to pay one's share of the taxes, harm his children, rob him in the dark or even rape his wife. Thus the very first duty of every Christian on being moral is to love one's neighbour.

Conclusion

We are living in a world whose moral fibres have decayed to an extent that it is threatened with collapse. Human suffering resulting from human greed has reached an enormous proportion. Nobody seems to be moral any more and human society is falling apart. But there is hope for the human race.

This paper has discussed the role of Christians in the restoration of moral righteousness in our societies. The use of reason in justifying moral living has also been discussed. Christianity is not opposed to secular reasoning though not necessarily in agreement.

The major conclusion drawn out of this presentation is that there is need for change in social behaviour for the survival of the human race.¹⁵ The task of restoring moral living lies heavily on Christians by the use of reason; other people may then realize their call to be moral. The writer calls for a diligent search for wisdom to direct all to engaging in healthy human relationships. This alone is however inadequate, thus the call for divine intervention through prayer.

Notes

1 William Frakena, Ethics (New Delhi: Prentice-Hall of India Private Ltd., 1988), 5-9.

2 Louis Pojman, Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1990), 173.

3 In this context, the term 'man' is used in the generic sense; that is, to mean both men and women. It is thus used throughout the paper unless otherwise stated.

4 Frakena, Ethics, 114.

5 Pojman, Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong, 10-12.

6 See: 1 Corinthians 14:33

7 Cited in Pojman, Ethics, 13.

8 Cited by Ethel M. Albert, Theodore C. Denise and Sheldon P. Peterfreund, Great Traditions in

Ethics, 5th edition (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1984), 358.

9 Ibid., 357.

10 Ibid., 355.

11 See: Gen. 1:26f.

12 Cited by Ethel M. Albert et al in Great Traditions in Ethics, 176.

13 Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1932), 58.

14 Pojman, Ethics, 13.

15 Cited in Paul Erlich, The Population Bomb: Population Control or Race to Oblivion? (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 197-198.

A Biblical Perspective on AIDS?

A Review Article

Zakaria Samita Wanakacha

What is the Christian response to contemporary issues?

Christians cannot simply stand aloof, on the fence, spectating at issues of local, national, regional or global concern. As the light or salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16), they must provide workable alternatives or solutions in crises.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is amongst the world's most crucial concerns. Individuals, governments and non-governmental organizations and the international community continue to contribute enormously towards the fight against AIDS. Dr. Donald Clarke's **AIDS: The Biblical Solutions** is an indication that the Church recognizes the reality of AIDS and its ever-increasing and challenging implications on humanity. Clarke's book is informed by his vast experience

as a Christian minister, counselor and educator/theologian.

The book has eight chapters. Chapter One deals with basic facts on AIDS: definitions, origins, symptoms, uniqueness, concepts and misconceptions regarding its transmission, precautions a Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive individual needs to take and preventative measures against its spread. The facts are enhanced by quotes from medical circles.

The second chapter identifies biblical precepts related to AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's). The spiritual, mental, and physical consequences of immorality are explored. The statement, 'The mental institutions are filled with people who refused to confess sin ... to behave responsibly ... to deal with guilt in God's way' (p.26) is rather general and needs reexamination. Regarding

physical consequences, death is the only example he mentions here. This is inadequate. Indeed, Clarke's discussion elsewhere in the book shows that there are many more physical consequences. The chapter discusses briefly but informatively STD's, AIDS included, emphasizing that perpetrators of such are headed for God's judgment. Moral sanctity is given as the solution for STD's. Clarke, however, clarifies that AIDS is not judgment upon the innocent, meaning that not all people with AIDS (PWA) are necessarily immoral. This qualification, however, needed to be stated louder than it is in this book. The Church has often been accused of taking an accusative attitude of judging PWA *en masse* as sinners rather than practically addressing their plight. Accordingly, the Church should seriously revisit this stand.

Chapter Three is the author's evaluation of the existing worldwide campaign efforts against AIDS. Promotion of safe sex, limiting of sexual partners, sex education, use of condoms, creating AIDS awareness among the public, caring and being humane to PWA are included in various campaign strategies. These, according to Clarke, are futile attempts to effectively combat AIDS. Sexual abstinence or marital fidelity constitute his prescription for AIDS. Clarke's recommendations cannot be

simplistically dismissed. An articulate moral theology must be upheld in frankly dealing with most of the contemporary global dilemmas. No efforts at tackling AIDS can be rated as serious enough if they ignore bold reference to moral realities. To a large extent, if people shunned bars, discos, prostitution and sodomy, AIDS would be brought to minimal levels. The bone of contention may be what many could view as Clarke's hardline stance that dollars, hours and efforts expended so far on stopping AIDS are merely a waste. To be sure, we are dealing with AIDS not just in a theocracy or in a christocentric enclosure but in a pluralistic society. What are the practical dimensions and implications of the author's recommendations? Some PWA may be interested only in our practical forms of therapy without necessarily adopting the Christian faith we present to them. Clarke, assuming a Christian audience, has not adequately addressed this reality.

Chapter Four examines the marriage estate as God's design to shield society against suffering e.g. AIDS. Clarke is right in the sense that most people consciously enter marriage with blissful hopes. He observes that divorce, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations and AIDS hinder realization of such bliss. He specifies what, from a biblical viewpoint, are approved and

forbidden sexual relationships. It is emphasized that conjugal rights are a privilege only within the marital institution. The chapter includes an outline of what he considers to be proper and improper marriage situations. This latter part is relevant in portraying the reality of most marriages in Kenya. It would benefit from more in-depth discussion. First, a biblical basis for discrediting some marriage situations is not given. Second, they are not viewed within the socio-economic milieu that called them into existence. Third, workable solutions to these problems are missing just as the full effect and implications of doing away with them are not addressed. Finally, a married audience is assumed. What of the unmarried and those that may never marry? Marriage, though a yearning for many, is increasingly becoming inaccessible to many, especially ladies. Verses quoted to support the no-divorce-whatsoever view seem convincing except for Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 which allow for divorce on infidelity grounds. The author's silence about these passages does not help inquisitive readers. Nevertheless, the chapter is useful in raising these issues for further discussion. It has useful suggestions for working towards fidelity in marriage by spouses. Apart from outlining some roles for spouses, it also

deals with some very real and practical marriage issues with regard to AIDS.

Since AIDS is viewed primarily as a moral problem rooted in sexual promiscuity, Chapter Five provides some practical principles on how to abstain from illicit sex, enhance moral rectitude and hence avoid contracting AIDS. The principles include devotion to scripture, correct thinking, being circumspect about what to read, watch/see, eat, sites to visit and company to associate with. The clarion call to 'No Sex' outside marital precincts is resounded in this chapter. The chapter calls attention to the moral integrity in cognitive, hygienic, and dietary aspects that should always characterize Christians. It is pointed out that this cannot be worked out on one's own initiative without divine intervention, but it still remains an individual's responsibility to exercise self-control. This balance is commendable. Church leaders are called upon to inculcate the youth with good values to enable them to live pure lives. This advice is appropriate. The youth are amongst the most vulnerable, at risk group to AIDS.

Chapters Six and Seven introduce a new and practical dimension, namely, counseling PWA. An emphatic Christian focus is unmistakable in these chapters. Accordingly, non-biblical counseling efforts are dismissed.

Goals, counselors, principles, suggestions and guidelines associated with counseling must be clearly christocentric. One can easily get the impression that Christians have a monopoly on wisdom, charisma, oratory, intelligence, or qualities that constitute effective counseling. This may be disputed by many. As much as it should be a prerogative in Christianity, counseling in itself is not a monopoly of Christians. Indeed, even Christian/biblical counseling benefits immensely from theories, principles developed by non-biblical proponents and disciplines without necessarily compromising its peculiarities. Taking every opportunity to witness for Christ is definitely crucial. This does not always mean refusing to acknowledge divergent standpoints or worthy contributions from others. We must give them their due recognition, both commending and pointing out their flaws objectively. In his recommendations, Clarke assumes that all pastors are trained or trainers in counseling. I cannot emphasize enough that counseling, including biblical/Christian counseling, is a discipline with recognized rudiments which apprentices, including Christians, need to master in order to be effective.

Chapter Six is a useful guide to a counsellor. It identifies important states a counsellee may be in: hopelessness,

shame, guilt, anger, bitterness, fear, worry, depression, suicidal, suffering. Thus, a PWA counsellee needs comfort and comprehensive succor from a counsellor. Chapter Seven has a variety of questions PWA may have with respect to spiritual, social, ethical and economic implications of AIDS. These questions are very important to counselors and counselees. Most of the answers accompanying the questions, though not exhaustive, are very practical and honest and deserve reading.

The final chapter is pragmatic in approach. The author revisits his emphasis on moral integrity in dealing with AIDS. The Church must speak against immorality. Some practical dimensions of ministry with a focus on AIDS are charted out. AIDS counseling centres, ministries for AIDS orphans and widows (what of widowers?), premarital counseling classes, church organized seminars on biblical sexuality and holistic activities/programmes for the youth are recommended. The Church is advised to be compassionate to the afflicted. The Church's challenge is to adequately present Jesus Christ as the answer in crises.

Some features make this book an important addition to the hitherto available literature on AIDS. Christians are duty-bound to provide

network efforts in AIDS education, prevention and care as a witness to Christ's compassion. There are practical biblical suggestions that can enrich a Christian counselor especially during home and hospital visitations to PWA. Some of the suggestions are applicable to other counseling situations as well. There are numerous biblical references on marriage, sexuality and suffering. These will benefit especially Christian counselors. There is the need to theologize such scriptural portions and relate them to counseling principles more than has been done. Apart from creating general awareness about AIDS, the book is unique in its practical dimensions especially in relation to Christian moral theology. The earnest call is that Christians at both individual and institutional levels must be practically concerned about the AIDS/HIV pandemic.

Readers of various categories will easily follow the language. Tabular forms and pictorial illustrations used here vivify the discussion, though statistical figures would have been a valuable inclusion. The greatest portion of the book serves the title. The book represents initial steps by Christians in addressing AIDS. These must be continued even further in practical dimensions in consistence with ministry that should always characterize the evangelical tradition.

A few errors and inconsistencies are detectable in this work. First, the word marriage is misspelt as marriage p. 51. Second, both the British and the American spelling styles are used indiscriminately, sometimes even for the same word. Notable cases include, behavior p.19/ behaviour p33, 51, 66, etc, counselor p.26/ counselor pp.83, 84, counseling pp.123, 125/ counseling p.137, counseled p.60, honour p.66, 76, honours p.66, honourable p.70, dishonour p. 109, tumors p.17, saviour p.35, defense p.54, self-centered p.94, centres p.123, fulfill pp.48, 94, 97, fulfilled p.71, fulfillment pp.30, 45, 50, and the verbs practice pp.21, 38,84, practiced p.120. The author should maintain a particular spelling style in order not to confuse a reader. Third, biblical books are sometimes abbreviated eg. Genesis pp.19, 21, 46 and Matt. p.22, 47. Elsewhere the books are rendered in full without any particular order eg. Genesis pp.19, 30, 45, Exodus pp.19, 22, Leviticus pp.44, Deuteronomy pp.17, 48, I Corinthians pp.21, 46, Matthew p.46 etc. Finally, though the close-to-thirty sources cited at the end of the book are valuable for further reference, it is appalling that very few of them are from Kenya/ Africa. Approaches to contemporary issues should incorporate not only contextual examples but also worldview for greater relevance. This should not

be difficult especially for Clarke with his about ten-year-experience in Kenya. Indeed, in the text he refers to African countries eg. Kenya and Uganda p.42, Tanzania and Zambia p.43. Some entries in the text are at variance with those in the sources cited eg. Costick p.42 and Costick p.131.

Fortunately, the aforementioned errors are too few to rob this book of its outstanding contributions. The book readily commends itself as a handbook for Christian readers and all those who have practical concern for AIDS and PWA. It will generate further discussion among readers with regard to the solutions offered. Finally, I should reemphasize, AIDS is a pandemic that requires a holistic and multi-faceted approach. Christians must intensify efforts to curb it. The biblical solution may not be doing it alone as Christians or dismissing all efforts from non-Christian circles.

***Romans: A New Translation with
Introduction and Commentary***
by Joseph A. Fitzmyer
(New York: Doubleday, 1993) i-xxxiv,
793 pp., \$40.00

In 1896, in the preface to their seminal commentary on Romans, William Sanday and Arthur Headlam wrote "The commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans which already exist in English . . . are so good and so varied that to add to their number may well seem superfluous." Over 90 years later, A.J.M. Wedderburn entitled a survey of recent commentaries on Romans "Like An Ever-Rolling Stream". The appearance of yet another commentary on this important epistle may be greeted with groans from those trying to keep up with the flood of literature on Paul. yet a commentary in a major international series by a scholar of Fitzmyer's stature warrants notice.

Father Fitzmyer, a Jesuit priest, is professor emeritus of biblical studies at the Catholic University of America. He is past president of both the Society of Biblical Literature and the Catholic Biblical Association in the United States. Readers will be familiar with his work largely due to his two volume commentary on Luke in the Anchor Bible series. Fitzmyer also wrote the articles on Romans for both the original

and revised Jerome Bible Commentary. In addition, he has published a synthesis of Paul's theology *According to Paul: Studies in the Theology of the Apostle* (Paulist, 1993).

The commentary opens with the author's own translation plus a treatment of introductory matters. As in his commentary on Luke, the introduction is extensive (almost 120 pages). The comments on the text begin with a reprint of the author's translation followed by general comments on the passage as a whole and then detailed verse by verse notes. Fitzmyer consistently provides clear, brief explanations of exegetical options (valuable for teachers). transliterated Greek or printed Latin are common, though always followed by an English translation. An extensive list of abbreviations is included as well as indices for subjects and commentators/modern authors.

With regard to larger interpretive issues, Fitzmyer classifies Romans as an "essay-letter" written within specific historical circumstances. However, his comments on the text itself often treat the text as a more abstract theological discussion divorced from those concrete circumstances. The "works" which Paul opposes Fitzmyer's understands in the traditional sense of deeds done to attain righteousness, contrary to interpretations recently advocated by

Sanders and Dunn. I will return to this point below.

Two features of this commentary set it apart from its fellows in the rolling stream. First, the thorough introduction provides an excellent overview of the standard issues - no small feat when one considers the quantity of scholarly literature on every facet of Romans. Fitzmyer also includes a 40 page treatment of Pauline theology arranged according to systematic categories (Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, etc.). While one may question whether categories borrowed from systematics are the most appropriate for understanding Paul's thinking, there is much helpful information here (which can largely be found in his book on Pauline theology).

Secondly, I have never seen a commentary with such extensive bibliographies drawing upon works written in numerous languages. His listing of writings on Paul's teaching, commentaries (arranged according to historical periods), and monographs runs from pages 143-224! Bibliographies also accompany each section of the introduction as well as each pericope. The reader will even find a listing for R.S. Burney's article on the purpose of Romans from the *African Journal of Biblical Studies* vol. 1! The bibliographies will prove invaluable for anyone involved in research, though I

suppose few libraries will have such extensive holdings.

While no one will agree with a commentator's views on every individual passage, two broader faults seriously flaw this work. First, one almost looks in vain for any reference to apocalyptic. The word is not even found in the subject index. Though Fitzmyer admits that Paul divides history into two periods (p.417), he never develops the significance of this obvious fact for his interpretation of Romans or of Paul's theology. For example, Fitzmyer's treatment of 5:12-21 does not even mention apocalyptic. Though the degree and nature to which apocalyptic categories influence Paul's thinking remains debated, an interpretation of Paul in which apocalyptic goes largely unnoticed simply distorts the evidence.

Second, Pauline studies have been dominated by the reexamination of Paul, the Law, and first century Judaism sparked primarily by Ed Sander's 1977 book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. While Fitzmyer mentions these developments, one looks in vain for a serious engagement with the issues raised by this debate - issues which affect our understanding of Paul and of Romans at the most fundamental level.

In a 1986 review in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Charles Talbert

characterized Fitzmyer's commentary on Luke as belonging to a past era of Lukan scholarship because it relied so heavily on source and redaction criticisms rather than on the newer literary approaches. The same judgment regarding eras can be pronounced over this volume. While this is a superb commentary in many ways, its shallow engagement with crucial issues raised in recent Pauline studies transforms a fine commentary on Romans into a fine commentary for a previous generation.

Yet a fine commentary it remains. For those looking for a traditional "Protestant" sounding commentary on Romans, this will pay handsome dividends. But in a commentary published in the 1990's by a major NT scholar in an important series, one has the right to expect more.

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***TEE Study Materials - Which Way
for a Changing Africa?***

by Grace Holland

(Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House,
1992)

In her opening Acknowledgment, Grace Holland gives credit to the Lord for prompting her in her thirty year endeavor to produce study materials for African Christians. That acknowledgment is a reminder of the central role that she and her husband, Fred, have played in the TEXT-Africa project, which has resulted in Africa's most widely used TEE texts. As Lois McKinney write in the Foreword, "The names of Grace Holland and her husband Fred have become synonymous with African TEE." Anyone working in TEE today will therefore be interested to learn what Grace Holland has to say in this important new book on the topic.

TEE Study Materials - Which Way for a Changing Africa is written in an academic style. It is the project report submitted by Grace Holland to trinity Evangelical Divinity school in USA for her Doctor of Missiology degree in June 1992. Her objective in this study is essential two-fold. First, it is to assess the changes that Grace Holland has seen in Africa and the current needs for training Christian leaders. Second, it is to offer

suggestions on the future production of TEE study materials for Africa. The focus is entirely upon the past experience and future prospects of the TEXT-Africa project.

The first half of the book is a review of the history of the TEXT-Africa series, a report on research completed by Arnold Labrentz in 1982, and a reflection on the changes that Grace Holland has seen in Africa since the initiation of TEE work. Then she describes the findings of her own research based upon the replication of Labrentz's earlier research. Finally, based upon her observations and experience in Africa, and upon the two research projects done in Kenya, she sets out her conclusions and recommendations for the future.

In regard to the current TEE study materials produced through the TEXT-Africa project and referred to as Level 3 texts, Dr. Holland argues for their continued use with some modification. She suggests that some of the repetition be removed and that the materials be made more challenging. At one point her suggestions seem conflicting, when she calls for the shortening of the material in order to reduce cost, and in the very next paragraph suggests more pictures and diagrams. She also identifies changing needs which should be addressed in the current books, and recommends that

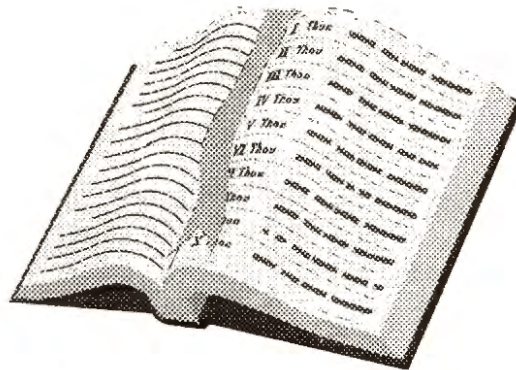
several additional books be written to address topics not yet adequately covered.

Dr. Holland concludes by proposing that two new series of TEE texts should be prepared, at the secondary level and the university level. She suggests that the production of these materials should be coordinated on a continent-wide basis. And for such a project she accents the importance of pursuing needs-research, evaluating existing study materials, establishing standards, and organizing the writing, editing, publishing and accreditation of new materials.

Grace Holland's new book is a significant part of the process of self-evaluation that TEE programmes so urgently need to undertake in our day, and furnishes important perspective and challenge to that end.

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