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The History and Nature of Gitari's Leadership Prowess (1986-91)

Julius Gathogo

The paper sets out to unveil the nature and history of the Anglican Archbishop David Gitari's leadership prowess in his crusade for a democratic society in Kenya from 1986 to 1991. It will first attempt to locate the background to his prophetic ministry, and then survey the methods and approaches that he employed during those turbulent days. It will then conclude with a critique on Gitari's all-inclusive approach to ministry (1986-1991).

Introduction

David Gitari was born on 16th September, 1937 to Evangelist Samuel Mukuba and Jessie Njuku in Ngirambu, Kirinyaga District of Central Kenya. He joined the University of Nairobi in 1959 where he graduated with a B.A. (hons.). He was greatly involved in a preaching ministry in schools and universities all over Africa. From 1968 to 1971, he studied theology at Bristol as an external student of the University of London and graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity. From 1972 to 1975, he served as the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya, and Chairman of Kenya Students Christian Fellowship (KSCF). He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity by Ashley Seminary, Ohio, USA in 1983. He was the Bishop of Mt. Kenya East from 1975 to 1990. After the split of the Diocese of Mount Kenya East, which was basically half of Kenya, he became the Bishop of Kirinyaga from 1990 to 1997. In 1997, he was elected as the third African Archbishop of Kenya and the Bishop of Nairobi where he served till 2002 when he finally retired.

The Background to Gitari's Prophetic Ministry

Unknown to many, the retired Archbishop David Mukuba Gitari's prophetic ministry was largely inspired by historical figures such as William Wilberforce, who as a social activist, a politician and as a committed Christian fought for forty-five years in the British parliament for the abolition of the slave trade and the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire. Another character is Lord Shaftesbury who helped to free British children and women from terrible

exploitation and inhuman treatment by factory owners who used them as cheap labour. Abraham Lincoln, also a good Christian, as the U.S. President who helped free the African slaves in his country in 1865 also inspired Gitari's view of social justice. Later Gitari was inspired by those like Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who fought for the Civil Rights of the Afro-Americans—which culminated in the repeal of the oppressive Jim Crow laws and the success of Civil Rights Bill of 1964 allowing African Americans to vote for the first time in American history. As an historian and theologian, Gitari also read the ministry of the prophets such as Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah and was convinced that the aim of life is not to avoid risks or pain but to do the will of God. He chose the 'narrow path' of criticising all the structural sins of commission and omission by the State—which almost cost him his life when some people were sent at night to kill him. In this 1989 incident, Gitari narrowly escaped death after he screamed as he moved to the top of his house thereby attracting his friendly neighbours who eventually thwarted the killing bid.

In the Kenyan context, Gitari had Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, the then Member of Parliament for the then Nyandarua North who inspired him through his commitment to social justice in the newly independent Kenya. And as a matter of fact, Gitari's known prophetic ministry began early in 1975 after the assassination of this populist and flamboyant Kenyan politician, who was fondly referred to as 'JM'. JM who was brutally murdered on 2 March, 1975 during Jomo Kenyatta's regime (1963-1975) was known to rub the government the wrong way on matters of social justice. Gitari says of him, JM 'was a hero of the resistance against the colonial government'. He is said to 'have been picked up by a party of unidentified men and driven to the Ngong Hills, where a shepherd boy discovered his mutilated body a few days later'.¹

As the editor of *Kenya Confidential* (Vol. 4 No. 10, 2000) and the 1975 Journalist of the Year Award Winner, Blamuel Njururi says of him: 'J. M., as he was popularity known, was not an ordinary member of parliament, but a visionary, who was one of the best socio-politically focused leaders at the time of his death.'² He could correctly read the blurred and dangerous future Kenya was headed towards as a greedy bunch of politicians took charge of the country. A clique of the ruling elite was emerging to dominate and determine the destiny of the then ten million Kenyans, manipulate state resources, control the economy through a pseudo-African socialism and to monopolize power.

JM was the first post-independence politician to surrender land allocated to him and gave it to the landless in his Nyandarua District while at the same time he criss-crossed the country donating generously to numerous causes. JM's political philosophy and belief that the Kenyatta Government had hijacked the aspirations of the freedom struggle mounted by the Mau Mau (freedom fighters) and his apparent ambition for leadership, won him true enemies within the ruling clique.

On economic and social justice, JM argued that it is characteristic of the developing nations that the greatest wealth is in the hands of the privileged few while the masses are impoverished. A stable social order cannot be built on the poverty of millions. Frustrations born of poverty and socio-economic inequalities breed turmoil and violence. Hence, the priority in any democratic developing country is economic prosperity coupled with the eradication of social and economic disparities. JM openly and courageously advocated the quest for social justice and equal opportunities for all. He strove for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. With reference of the Kenya of today, he remarked—

A small but powerful group of greedy, self-seeking elite in the form of politicians, civil servants and businessmen has steadily but very surely monopolized the fruits of independence to the exclusion of the majority of the people. We do not want a Kenya of ten millionaires and ten million beggars.³

On neo-colonialism, JM argued that colonial masters are to be found in government ministries 'dressed in a new cloak labelled economic adviser to such and such a ministry or to so-and-so. They advice us in their interests and we follow them like sheep'.⁴ Before he was assassinated, he highlighted the value of patriotism by saying: 'It takes more than a National Anthem, however stirring, a National Coat of Arms, however distinctive, a National Flag, however appropriate, a National Flower, however beautiful, to make a Nation.'⁵ JM is greatly remembered for his perceptive remarks—

...Since Kenya became independent in 1963, we have moved away from the state which we intended to create...

...Kenya has become like a tree growing very tall, very quickly, but it is going to fall because it does not have deep roots, is not firmly rooted in the people and in society...

...we do not want a country of ten millionaires and ten million beggars...⁶

JM's brutal murder was followed by a period of nationwide unrest; University students took to the streets demanding to be told the killers. Bombs were set off in public places and anonymous pamphlets implicated the government in the killing thereby worsening the existing tension. The Revd. David Gitari, the erstwhile General Secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya (a few months before he became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Mt Kenya East) was invited by the National Christian Council of Kenya (hereafter NCKK) to preach on the State Radio's "Lift Up Your Hearts" programme. He called this programme which was reserved for NCKK "Lift up the Nation". It was delivered from the Nairobi Baptist Church on 20th April, 1975. Gitari spoke on the United Nations' General Assembly proclamation of 10th December, 1948 on Human Rights. Likening JM's killers to Cain who killed Abel, Gitari reminded the Nation that the UN Declarations on Human Rights included The right to life, The right to liberty and security, The right to education; Equality before the law, Freedom of movement and religion, Freedom of Association and, Freedom to marry and have a family.⁷

In this live broadcast, on 20th April, 1975, Gitari said—

You are created in the image of God and for that reason nobody should deny you the right to exist. The Bible presents physical life as the creation of God who alone is the source of life, and human beings have no independent right to shed blood and take life. A person does not even have the liberty to take his [or her] own life. He [or She] is accountable to God for what he [or she] has done to himself [or herself] or his [or her] fellow human being. When Cain murdered his brother Abel, God asked him, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And Cain answered: 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' And God said to Cain, 'What have you done Cain? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground and now you are cursed...'. Today God is asking Kenyans, 'Where is your brother JM Kariuki?' And those who assassinated him or planned his assassination are saying, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'⁸

After giving the fourth series of the "Lift Up the Nation" talks, Gitari received a telephone from the Voice of Kenya, the State Corporation, inviting him for a 'dialogue'. Here he met seven officials from the Ministry of Information where Mr. Kangwana, the Chairman, informed him that his Radio talk shows 'were

very disturbing'.⁹ But Gitari informed those top officials that if his talks were disturbing, then they had achieved their goals 'as the gospel is very disturbing to sinners'.¹⁰ A few months later, Gitari was elected the Bishop of Mount Kenya East where he continued with his prophetic ministry till he was elected the Archbishop of Kenya in 1997. As the Archbishop of Kenya and Bishop of Nairobi, Gitari continued with his ministry till his retirement in 2002.

Gitari's Crusades for Multi-party Political System (1986-1991)

Following his election as the Bishop of Mount Kenya East, in 1975, Gitari did not immediately appear too vocal on matters of State. He concentrated most of his energies in bringing up his young Diocese, which had less than twenty parishes and clergy.¹¹ Following the death of President Jomo Kenya in August, 1978, the new President, Daniel Arap Moi appeared to start well, encouraging the Nation to preserve their environment by planting trees, telling the Nation to do family planning, respect and care for the elderly, children, disabled and other marginal of the society. He even introduced a new philosophy—Nyayo philosophy of Peace, Love and Unity—which Gitari and other Church leaders of the time found compatible with the Christian Testament.

Things changed for the worse when a fresh alertness towards matters of government began to emerge after the constitutional amendment of 1982 that made Kenya *a de jure* one party state. Not long after the attempted coup took place, Kenyan politics began to take a nosedive. Subsequent constitutional amendments consolidating the power of the executive did not make matters any better as the State became very intolerant to dissenting voices. As a result some were abducted and killed, others were jailed or detained without trial. This infuriated the Church leaders and in particular, the National Council of Churches where Gitari was Chairman (1978-1980 and 1982-1985). By 1985, the State had begun to rig out popular Parliamentary and Party candidates who were considered to be critical of the governance of the country.

To this end, the National Council of Churches (formerly the National Christian Council of Kenya) organised a National Pastors' Conference in 1986 at Kenyatta University where Gitari and members of the Council took their radical stand against the queue voting system where rigging was rampant. In 1988, NCCCK used its publication, *Beyond*, to document evidence of massive rigging and many other electoral malpractices during the years General

Elections. Amidst intense criticism, this activism culminated in the banning of *Beyond Magazine*. As a result, two of NCKK's journalists (David Makali and Bedan Mbugua) were jailed in Manyani Prison! This did little to improve relations between the Protestant Church leaders and the government. Indeed this general uneasiness and mistrust defined their relationship for years to come.

Gitari's turning point as a crusader for a Multi-party political system in Kenya is clearly seen in 1986 after two particular events. First, the then ruling party (and the only registered one), Kenya African National Union (hereafter, KANU) made an anti-people and anti-Christian recommendation in the governance of the country. In a record ten minutes, they passed twelve resolutions, their 3,600 delegates debating nothing as a political debate (where this or that was critiqued) was unofficially 'prohibited' in those dark days.¹² Thus like the proverbial frogs, the delegates just said 'Yes' to every resolution that was read however unfair to the populace. This infuriated Gitari. He says, 'I spoke publicly to say that it was a terrible waste of people's time to make them just a rubber stamp and this hit the headlines.'¹³ Rather than address the concerns he had raised, Gitari and the rest of the vast majority of Kenyans were surprised to see the Kenyan parliament suspending its ordinary services to 'discuss' him as 'unpatriotic' and serving his 'foreign masters'. In short, they spent almost three hours hurling insults at him.

Secondly, adding insult to injury, another KANU assembly passed a resolution that 'the future elections will take the form of queuing behind the candidates' and not the old and acceptable method of secret ballot. In other words, 'if you have three candidates, you tell the voters to line up behind the one you like most'.¹⁴ Since this is done during the daytime, everyone was expected to see clearly who wins or who loses. This was a divisive method as Church leaders who wanted to vote were fearful to vote by queuing as that would have divided the members of the congregation. To his utter surprise, Gitari, who went just to observe the elections, saw 'terrible' elections. Why? There was open rigging, as the leader of the shorter queue would be declared the winner through the State Radio provided, he or she was a 'government candidate'. This made Bishop Okullu team up with Gitari and like-minded church leaders to say that seventy percent of the Sixth Kenyan parliament was selected and not elected.¹⁵

The above two events convinced Gitari that Kenya needed undiluted change, (read multiparty political system) so that those who were dissatisfied can join a party of their choice. From 1986, Gitari used his spare time condemning the queuing system and the whole philosophy behind single-party political dictatorship till President Moi yielded to pressure and accepted the repeal of Section 2A of the Kenyan constitution which prohibited the formation of any other political party apart from the ruling KANU in December, 1991. This now drives us to ask ourselves, which methods and approaches did Gitari employ in his crusade for multiparty democracy in Kenya (1986-91)?

Methods and Approaches in Gitari's Ministry (1986-91)

First, Gitari respected the **Bible as authoritative** where it is translated in the local language of the Gikuyu (also referred to as Kikuyu). Knowing the context, which is deeply religious, was a plus for Gitari as he spoke his political mind through the use of expository sermons which were faithfully interpreted from the biblical texts. For example when decrying grabbing of Kamuruana hill, a public property, by the Kirinyaga County Council to two local politicians who called themselves JIMKA and JAKEN, Gitari went to the nearby Mutuma Trinity Church in 1991 and relevantly picked the text of 1 Kings 21:1-29 and then used as his sermon theme, 'Was There No Naboth to Say No?'¹⁶ Such an approach always stirred his audience to think and see the grabber as King Ahab and strengthen their resolve to pursue the big fish.

Another example is his decrying of the Government crackdown on *Mwakenya* political dissidents—a group who released pamphlets to criticise the excesses of the State. He noted that most of the suspects who were taken to court at odd hours were innocent Kenyans who were tortured and forced to confess to being involved in clandestine movements and were subsequently jailed on trumped-up charges. In his sermons, Gitari urged the nation not to conform to the patterns of this world nor matter the persecutions (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).¹⁷

This reliance on the Bible confirms its centrality in African Christianity—a fact that is revealed in its wide translation, being 'the most widely read book in tropical Africa'.¹⁸ As Mugambi can state—

The Bible is the most widely available book in both rural and urban areas. It can be regarded as the most influential book in Africa. The Bible is read

at primary and secondary schools, in colleges and Universities, in Seminaries, during Worship Services, in fellowship meetings and in private devotion and meditation.¹⁹

Indeed, ‘most Christians carry copies of the bible, or parts of it, everywhere they go, and read it when they have a little time to spare. Even when they do not have the Bible in their hands, they will refer to it as they talk and pray’.²⁰ As John Karanja observes—

Kikuyu Christians showed considerable latitude in interpreting and applying the Bible from the time the scripture was available in their vernacular. Although the text of the Bible was fixed, its interpretation was not. The athomi (readers) used the Bible creatively to serve their pastoral, political and cultural needs. Pastors used it to promote morality and giving in the church. Politicians used it to create tribal consciousness; apologist for Kikuyu culture used it to affirm their own religion and culture. Indeed, Kikuyu creative use of the scripture demonstrates their ability to adopt and exploit western innovations.²¹

Secondly, Gitari was fond of **appealing to history**. For example, he was fond of comparing bad leaders with Adolf Hitler, the man who ruled Germany in the 1930s who stirred the world into a Second World War (1939-45).²² By drawing from his vast knowledge of world history, Gitari was first and foremost calling upon his audience to think deeply and place themselves historically in the map of the world. The end result, Gitari hoped, would be that Kenyans would discover that they are not on their own island but part of the world civilisations and deserved respect. This appeal to history was highly enlightening. Gitari wanted to tell the oppressive regime it was time to take him seriously for, as a scholar-bishop, he spoke from an informed position. How could they afford to ignore the prophet and the moral leader of his time?

Third, Gitari used an **all-inclusive approach** in his ministry (1986-1991). This means that he did not only recognise the ecumenical movement in Africa (read NCKK, AACC, etc.) as a vital institution whose existence is not only indispensable due to the problems created by denominationalism,²³ but more importantly, he worked with non-Christians and the emerging opposition politicians. Gitari would also invite the so-called political dissidents, most of

whom got into the government when KANU finally lost in the 2002 general elections. They included the fiery Hon. Paul Muite (an Anglican), Hon. Waruru Kanja (a Muslim), Hon. Professor Wangari Maathai (who became the first African Woman Nobel Laureate in 2004), and Hon. James Orengo. In 1991 he invited everyone who was interested to pray for a return to a Multi-party political system to assemble at St. Thomas Kerugoya Anglican Cathedral for prayers. The 'prayer session' included who's who in opposition politics of the time! I remember in 1987 when, as my bishop, he invited Hon. Nahashon Njuno, the then Kirinyaga East MP, now Gichugu constituency, to speak to a congregation in my local Emmanuel Church, Mutira, to greet the congregation even when the Government through the local KANU Branch had barred him from speaking in public. By 'breaking the law', Gitari was trying to tell the Kenyan authorities that 'no one has a right to deny you the right to freedom of speech and association'. Secondly, Gitari was trying to guard against any form of societal fragmentation—as being one is far much better than being divided when we have a common course.

It is crucial to acknowledge that an all-inclusive approach to Church ministry calls upon Christians to put more emphasis on developmental issues that concern the society of faith where it is being articulated. In such circumstances, Christian faith is forced to put more emphasis on environmental degradation, reconciliation, domestic violence, gender disparities, and the power of love, and a sustainable society. By his all-inclusive approach, Gitari had the last laugh when the high-handed KANU yielded to the demands of the vast majority of Kenyans who had Gitari and a few church leaders to speak for them—as the real voice of the people.

Fourth, Gitari's methodology included the **use of ancestral resources** to communicate his message of liberation and reconstruction of our society which, among other things, was in dire need of political reform. By use of ancestral resources, Gitari encouraged the Christian message to be communicated through folk dances but with some revisions so that the contents would address the worship of the Christian God as opposed to the God of African Traditional Religion. To demonstrate this, Gitari saw to the production of a Christian hymnbook, *Nyimbo Cia Gucanjamura Ngoro* (literally, 'songs to warm the heart'), with ancestral melodies that clearly reflected the local context. In so doing, he led the Christians to own the gospel

as the word that was delivered to them from time immemorial when their ancestors used to sing happily. This methodology of communicating the Christian faith using some ancestral resources compatible with the Christian Testament is also seen in Jesse Mugambi, the Anglophone theologian's conviction that the ancestral resources can be creatively exploited in African Christianity.²⁴ On the other hand, Kä Mana presents past African cultural values and traditions as a 'decaying reality' or as a 'disintegrating reality'—and cautions that any attempt at avoiding Africa's present problems by going back to its ancient times is a new type of estrangement—which, to him, is equivalent to surrendering ourselves to 'the dictatorship of the past'.²⁵ In particular, Kä Mana introduces his analysis of the ethical dimensions of the human crisis in Africa in an alarming way. He paints an alienating and despairing picture of African societies and proposes that only a radical reconstruction of an African approach to religious and socio-political realities would heal them from their major shortcomings.²⁶

While not discarding either of the two viewpoints, a theology of reconstruction can not ignore the huge contribution of anthropological resources in Africa; as they can, indeed, be positively exploited to do a psychosocial reconstruction of Africa. This compares with Wole Soyinka's proposal on the way forward with regard to handling reconciliation in Africa where one of his resources is that of religious myth. Specifically Soyinka turns to his ancestral Yoruba pantheon and to their rituals and mythology. In this, the gods come down to the mortals to oversee the atonement festival, reminding them of the necessity for atonement and forgiveness.²⁷ He thus says—

Most African traditional societies have established modalities that guarantee the restoration of harmony after serious infractions—see, for instance, the banishment of Okonkwo after involuntary homicide in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. And, if we may be somewhat whimsical, Emperor Bokassa's bizarre return to Central African Republic, in full knowledge of what fate awaited him, argues strongly for some kind of supernatural intervention—the vengeful souls of the violated children dragging him back from the security of his French asylum? Certainly, a singularly atrocious act appeared to be denied closure until the perpetrator returned to expiate on the scene of the crime. Maybe, in the sphere of abominations, (African) nature does abhor a vacuum. Are we then

perhaps moving too far ahead of our violators in adopting a structure of response that tasks us with a collective generosity of spirit, especially in the face of ongoing violations of body and spirit?²⁸

Even though Gitari was not as extreme as Wole Soyinka, he nevertheless did not assume that African ancestral resources did not have anything to offer in enriching the gospel in Africa. Thus, in building the case for appealing to the use of ancestral resources in Gitari's ministry (1986-91), it is critical to appreciate that some ancestral resources such as African philosophies, proverbs, sayings, morality, hospitality, and religiosity, among others, provided Gitari with a chance to make the gospel authentically African.

Fifth, Gitari's methodology included the use of slogans and repetitive phrases. To drive his point home, he had a unique way of keeping the crowd together. For example, whenever he made a 'sensitive' comment(s), he would ask the crowd, *Muguki-igua? Mukuiguai?* (Did you hear? Did you see? Meaning, 'Have you heard and seen?' or 'Are you travelling with me?'). The ever-enthusiastic audience would automatically note the seriousness of the matter under discussion and respond in unison: *Tuguki-iguai, Tuguki-onai* (literally, we have heard, we have seen).

When the Pentecostal wave threatened Gitari's domain by working hard to fish from Gitari's pond, on one hand, and the suspected Government agents, on the other hand were releasing leaflets to discredit him and the Church in general, he responded by coining a sloganeering song that was sung thus—

Ona ni kure mbura — Even if it rains
Ona ya kiboboto — Even if it is heavy flooding
Kana ya micumari — Even if it rains Nails
Kanitha ndikoima — I will never abandon the Church
Kanitha nii ndikoimai — I vow never to ever abandon my church
Kanitha ndikoma — I will stick to my church
Ona ni kure mbura — Even if it rains
Ona ya kiboboto — Even if it is heavy flooding
Kana ya micumari — Even if it rains Nails
Kanitha ndikoima — I will never abandon the Church

By the word ‘Church’, Gitari, though an ecumenist, was referring to his own Anglican Church of Kenya, Kirinyaga Diocese (1986-1991). Raining Nails referred to the State persecutions that the Church underwent as a result of the uncompromising stand that he had taken on matters of social justice on both local and national levels. Like John in Revelation (1–4), Gitari was simply telling his audience, *Vumilia mateso ya sasa. Ni ya muda tu! Tuzo la baadaye ni kubwa*—‘Persevere the persecution that you are encountering now. It is only for a while. You will be crowned with abounding victory later. So stand firm’.

Gitari cautioned his audience not to abandon the Church. He told his local Kirinyaga Diocese and later the Nation as a whole that they should not allow themselves to be carried away by emerging waves, be they religious or political. Since Pentecostal church leaders were supporting the government and arguing that Gitari was doing politics rather than ‘preaching the Word of God’, it made Pentecostalism to attract more Christians from the mainline churches who were not sure whether Gitari was doing right or wrong – as some Christians were convinced that there could never be any juxtaposition between Church and Politics. In his retirement, Gitari has watched some leaders of these Pentecostal churches declaring their intentions to stand for elective posts in the government of the Nation—some years after they had opposed his crusade for a *laissez faire* society for all. Hence an African proverb that says, ‘He who tills the land is not necessarily the one who eats the produce of the farm.’

Sixth, Gitari employed **story-telling** as a method in his ministry (1986-1991). He would tell stories of personified animals and the audience would understand his figurative language. As a matter of fact, story-telling as an art is one major form of communication in the African indigenous society. Although it was told around a fire camp in African traditional society, Gitari would tell stories which were always relevant to his chosen biblical text in the pulpit. In general, story-telling is a means of communication that links the history of a people from their origins to the present. It is also one of the major forms of informal education in Africa, and is indispensable as a means of illustrating an important message in the context of Africa. Storytelling as a traditional art creates above all, a deep sense of friendship and community. This finds a parallel in the bible, which is a collection of stories told about a people, namely, the Israelites and the disciples of Jesus.

Why did he use story-telling as a methodology in communicating the 'sensitive' messages? First, it was a way of educating the masses without necessarily causing lots of legal conflicts with the local government who were always trailing him for the wrong reasons. Second, as a scholar, he wanted to come out of the academic ivory towers and be with his audience. As Anthony Balcomb²⁹ says—

So stories are not just the domain of skilled or professional storytellers who brighten our lives with their gift of storytelling. Stories are the domain of all human beings who want not only to make sense of life but [also] to open up all sorts of possibilities in life. This is because we do not only tell stories about what does happen but also about what could happen. We challenge ourselves to greater possibilities, unknown in practice but known in the imagination by asking ourselves the question 'What if?' What if we could all live together in peace? What if everyone could have a say in government? What if we could find a cure for AIDS? What if we could solve the crime question? Without narrative we could not only not do history but we could not do law, we could not do science, we could not do politics and we could not do theology.³⁰

A Critique on Gitari's 'all-inclusive' Approach to Ministry

By inviting everyone regardless of race, creed, religion, gender, faith or colour to work with him during those turbulent days, Gitari risked making Christianity look like mission without borders. In other words, was it Church ministry that he was doing, or was it a matter of inviting both Jews and Gentiles to build the wall (cf. Neh. 2)? By the large attendance of opposition politicians in his 'political ministry' (1986-91), wasn't that implying that the gospel is with the opposition while the government was not? Wouldn't that have given the wrong impression that Gitari was taking sides between two warring factions rather than reconciling them—as a bishop? Thus, the 'all-inclusive' approach in Gitari's ministry can attract mixed reactions from various practitioners of Christian faith. If the Christian ministry is undertaken without caution one may wonder if we are going to include even 'Satan' in our theo-socio schema? What is our moral-ethical consideration in 'including everyone'? Are we going to include tares even when we know it is not wheat?

Conclusion

On the whole, Gitari's approach to church ministry (1986-91) was theologising from his Kirinyagan and the Kenyan context. For that reason, his ministry addressed the challenging issues of the time—though earned him enemies with the State machinery. He challenged corruption in high places as well as at the local level. This is contextual theologising—a phenomenon where theology is done under the premise that the social, ecclesiastical, historical or geographical contexts or the environment consciously or unconsciously influences theological articulation. His motive in emphasising the context was due to 'the fundamental understanding that there is no neutral or absolute meaning of a text or, for that matter, of any human communication'.³¹ In so doing, Gitari utilised the hermeneutical keys of doing theology by sticking to what Kwame Bediako calls 'the hermeneutic of identity'.³² As we confront the new challenges of the twenty-first century, we need to reflect on Gitari's ministry as one way of understanding the reality of Christian leadership in Africa today.

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ENDNOTES

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3. Gathogo, *The Truth About African Hospitality*, p. 112.
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