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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY: *AJET* IS TWENTY YEARS OLD

There are many occasions which lead people to celebrate – holidays like Christmas or New Year, accomplishments like graduation or promotion, or milestones like a **birthday**. When people celebrate, they go beyond the usual and customary. They have a blast and spend money to celebrate.

With the publication of this issue *AJET* is celebrating twenty years of continuous publication. The first word of thanks belongs to the Lord of the Church who made all this possible - the vision, personnel, authors, readers and the funding. *AJET* is God's gift to the Church in Africa and the world.

AJET began with a vision sparked by a lectureship in 1981 sponsored by ACTEA (Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa). Dr. Carl Henry, renowned evangelical theologian, challenged the participants to think theologically about African Christianity and to engage thinking Africans with the gospel and its implications. Dr. Mark Shaw, a lecturer at Scott Theological College, felt strongly that something should be done. So he drafted a proposal for a theological journal which was approved by the Principal and Academic Council at Scott. This journal was launched in 1982 as the *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* with the title changed in 1990 to be the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. Dr. Mark Shaw became the first Managing Editor of *AJET* and continued in this position until 1995 when the present Editor took over. Rev. Isaac Simbiri became General Editor and Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa, served as a consultant. Dr. Adeyemo's series of lectures at Scott in 1981 on "Salvation in Africa" became serialised in the first few issues of *AJET*. Dr. Paul Bowers was an early consultant who then became the book review editor. He continues to this day as an active and invaluable assistant behind the scenes.

By God's grace *AJET* has grown from strength to strength. Let us enumerate the ways in which *AJET* has grown.

- Today subscribers are found in five continents.
- Authors of articles come from all over Africa and the world.
- African scholars are now the principal contributors to *AJET*.
- The number of pages in the journal has grown more than three-fold.

To celebrate the birthday of *AJET*, we have made this issue 50% larger than any other previous issue. It includes a complete index of all articles and book reviews that have appeared in *AJET* from the beginning. These indexes include an Author's Index, Topical Index and a Book Review Index. You may scan the variety of articles throughout the history of *AJET* publication and you will find a rich and unique contribution to the field of theological reflections in Africa.

A few years ago we were scrounging for articles. These days we are receiving excellent articles in greater abundance than we can publish. *AJET* has become a premier theological journal for Africa.

"The future is as bright as the promises of God." Though we look back to see what God has done through *AJET*, we look forward to even greater things to come. We value your support and invite your prayers for an even greater ministry of *AJET* in the years to come.

An Apology: In the last issue of *AJET* (20.1), we published an excellent article by Dr. Samuel Kunhiyop entitled, "Poverty: Good News for Africa." We want to extend our apologies to the author and to you, the readers, for an oversight by not including the many scholarly footnotes and bibliography. The article was received by Email and the editor overlooked one of the Attachments which provided the important documentation.

If you desire to receive the endnotes and bibliography along with the whole article on "Poverty: Good News for Africa," you may obtain this by sending an email addressed to:

<kunhiyop-poverty@xc.org> Do not enter any subject heading or message, just the email address. You will receive a copy of the complete article automatically by email (about 18 pages).

EVALUATION OF THE THEOLOGY OF BOLAJI IDOWU

Bulus Galadima

Bolaji Idowu has been one of the more influential theologians in Africa during the last half of the 20th century. In fact, as a pioneer in developing African Christian Theology, he has made a profound impact on theology in Africa. How do evangelicals assess his approach to theology in the African continent?

Dr. Bulus Galadima examines his theology as evidenced in his three major publications: Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief; African Traditional Religion: A Definition; and Towards an Indigenous Church. Only that African Christian Theology which has deep roots in the Scripture can help the Church in Africa today.

INTRODUCTION

That contemporary theological scene has become chaotic. There appears to be no consensus on what the task of theology is or how theology is to be pursued ... Of course there has always been disagreement about the methods and objectives of theological work, but the crisis at this time, is more serious than heretofore.¹

Dr. Bulus Y. Galadima is the Academic Dean at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS) but is on sabbatical leave in the USA, teaching, researching and writing. He earned his BA in 1984; an MA from Wheaton College and an

¹ Gordon D. Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method*, (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), p. ix.

MA from Northeastern Illinois University in 1993. His Ph.D. was earned in Historical Theology from Trinity International University in 1994.

The problem is further compounded for the African theologian because many people feel alienated from Christianity. Many an educated African identifies the God of Christianity as "the God of the White man." This, says Professor Bolaji Idowu, poses a challenge to African Christians and theologians as they seek to make the message of Christianity available to their fellow Africans. Theologians must get to know their people thoroughly and approach their people's belief reverently because the Christian possesses that which is the key to the soul of their fellow Africans – their language.² Many Africans have heeded Idowu's call.

However, the essential question is, "How many of the current works truly qualify as African Christian Theology?" At the heart of this challenge is the issue of religious language. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the attempt of Professor Bolaji Idowu, the man who sounded the clarion call for this endeavour.

AFRICAN THEOLOGY: ROLE OF CULTURE AND ATR

It is necessary to define the major terms used in this paper. African Theology refers to African Christian Theology. It is not a theology built upon African traditional religious concepts. It is rather a theology built on Christian presuppositions. It is a theology trying to make Christian teachings comprehensible to Africans using African concepts as medium of conveying the truths. It is also a theology that seeks to express an African understanding of the Christian message.³

It follows necessarily from the above that when we say "African Religious Language", we mean "African Christian Religious Language".

In recent times, there has been a lot of contextualizing of Christianity in Africa and the rest of the world: this has greatly aroused my interest in the subject. I believe that contextualization in Africa

² Kwesi Dickson, and Paul Ellingworth ed., *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1969), p. 15.

³ I do not share Idowu's position that the concept "African Theology" applies to any religious formulation. See "Study of Religion" *Orita* 1:1 p.4.

calls for the paying of close attention to the role of African culture in Christianity. Since the wake of contextualization, African Christians have been encouraged to take pride in their cultural heritage. This is good, and it has proved to be beneficial to the survival of African culture.

However, true contextualization will only occur if we discover the locus of Africanity or Africanness. African soul is truly distinguished in its conceptual nature and thought, not in exclusion of the tangible cultural symbols. Observable cultural expressions ought to be the result of the inner guiding principles, that is, the concepts and worldview.⁴

Therefore, the solution to the problem of Christianity and theology in Africa does not lie primarily in the use of vernacular language. It lies in finding how to transmit clearly the concepts and ideas embodied in Christianity to the African mind.⁵

The study of a people's culture is very significant to understanding who they are. Gordon Kaufman says, "every culture known to modern investigators, no matter how primitive, possesses myths which set out pictures of the world within which the life of that people is lived, and which provide fundamental guidance and orientation for that life."⁶ Besides, in African societies religion and culture are inseparable.⁷ To adequately comprehend one, the study of the other is necessary. We agree with Idowu that there are sufficient similarities between African Traditional Religions to warrant the use of the singular.⁸

⁴ It is also true that the concrete cultural elements influence concepts. That is to say, the relationship between the two is reciprocal. However, the influence of the inner on the outer is stronger. (Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1980.)

⁵ This does not undermine the efforts of Professors Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* and Kwame Bediako's emphasis on the "mother tongue" as a language of the heart, thus the language of enduring theology and deep theological reflection. Bediako himself is fluent in his mother tongue and uses a local Ghanaian dialect for devotions at Akrofi-Memorial Centre.

⁶ Kaufman, *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷ Idowu says this is true of all cultures. See "The Study of Religion with special reference to African Traditional Religion," *Orita* 1:1 (June, 1967):3.

⁸ The title of his book *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1975), suggests this. In all his writings, he consistently

Though Africans have embraced Christianity,⁹ they are still Africans; therefore, they have a strong desire to maintain their identity as Africans, though Christians. There is cry for an African theology. Dr. Lugira says that it was Professor Bolaji Idowu who first called African theologians to the serious consideration of making Christian Theology relevant to the African people.¹⁰ Professor Idowu says that

The Church in Africa could only attain selfhood and be adequate for her mission when she possessed a first-hand knowledge of the Lord of the Church and was able to express that knowledge in clear accents made possible through her own original meditation and thinking... The Church has been speaking in Africa and to Africans in strange or partially understood tongues.¹¹

African theology emerged out of a complex social, cultural, religious and political matrix. We have briefly addressed the reason why there is a need for an African theology. We discovered that the need arose because Christianity is foreign to the African people. However, this is the first and primary reason that instigated the doing of African theology. A second and more recent reason stated for doing African theology is the desire to protect Christianity in Africa from syncretism. It is more commonly assumed that engaging in African theology would lead to syncretism but Aylward Shorter has argued the reverse. He says that the lack of African theology has led to syncretism because the tension between African culture, African Traditional Religion, and Christianity is inevitable. And without African theology, people

uses the singular to describe African religions even though he is aware of the differences.

⁹ Africans have also embraced Islam since the seventh century. The Islamic religion has penetrated large zones of north and west Africa, just as somewhat earlier Coptic Christianity had spread into limited areas, as in Egypt and Ethiopia. However, our concern in this paper is with Christianity alone.

¹⁰ David Niringiye, "Prolegomena to an African Theology: An Examination of the Sources and Methodology of Mbiti's Theology," (M.A. Thesis, Wheaton Graduate School, 1987), p. 15 quoting Aloysius M. Lugira, "African Christian Theology," *African Theological Journal* 8:1, 1971, p. 56.

¹¹ Dickson & Ellingworth, ed., p. 9.

unconsciously syncretize Christianity.¹² The question that we are now confronted with is this: "Is it possible to adapt Christianity to a culture so that it maintains its identity while being understandable to the people?"

Shorter noted that the way Christianity is presented fails to take into consideration the African traditional thought system. Thus many African Christians operate with an overlay of a Christian thought system on the old.¹³ Christianity needs to interrelate with African culture and African Traditional Religion if Christianity is to survive in Africa, and if a truly African theology is to be formulated. Africans cannot exist apart from their cultural heritage. The influence of their traditional religion is an imminent threat to orthodox Christianity. Therefore, a thorough study of African Traditional Religion and culture are necessary for African theology to avoid the unconscious syncretism which abounds. Also, since the African cultural and religious heritage is part of the African's identity, African Traditional Religion is necessarily a source of African theology. "In speaking, therefore, of African Traditional Religion, we are speaking of a complex developing phenomenon, and one which, though visibly changing, is far from moribund."¹⁴

SOURCES OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY

There are as many sources of African theology as there are theologians. The Pan-African conference of Third World theologians identified five sources: (1) the Bible and Christian heritage, (2) African anthropology, (3) African Traditional Religion, (4) African Independent Churches, and (5) African realities.¹⁵ Muzorewa and Fashole-Luke identify four sources: (1) African Traditional Religion, (2) the Bible, (3) African Independent Churches, and (4) Christian tradition. For Pobee, the sources are slightly different; they are the

¹² Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), pp. 14-15.

¹³ Shorter, p. 10.

¹⁴ Shorter, p. 2.

¹⁵ It is not clear what this refers to. Probably, it is a reference to African cultural distinctions.

Bible, the tradition of the church, and revelation in African theology. The main elements of his theology are experience, revelation, Scriptures, tradition, culture and reason.¹⁶ Niringiye says that "of all the sources of African theology, African Traditional Religion has received the greatest attention."¹⁷

When the interpretation of African religious experience is given a Christian formulation, African traditional theology could become Christian theology. The latter is interpreted in the light of Christ's teachings, the former in the light of what God has revealed to the African religious consciousness. The two are not necessarily exclusive of one another. In each case, it is God who chooses to be revealed, whether through the Son or through a bush without a name.¹⁸

Muzorewa and other African theologians like him see the African Traditional Religion as a source of African theology just as Christian theology is. Mbiti's approach assumes that "Christianity comes to enhance African traditional religions." This implies that there is no tension between the major elements of African Traditional Religions and the major claims of Christianity."¹⁹

Down through the history of the church, the church fathers used the reflection of the non-Christians in their theologising as it illuminates and more powerfully presents what the Scripture teaches. I should also seek to use the categories of African Traditional Religion – in African theology – that powerfully explains the teaching of the gospel just like the early fathers used concepts of *logos*, *substance*, *persona* and many others. This is the position that I hold. With this background discussion, we are now ready to examine Bolaji Idowu's theology.

BOLAJI IDOWU'S THEOLOGY

The Man: Professor E. Bolaji Idowu, "the learned President of the Methodist Church of Nigeria,"²⁰ as Kato called him, has had profound

¹⁶ Niringiye, p. 44-45.

¹⁷ Niringiye, p. 50.

¹⁸ Muzorewa, p. 83.

¹⁹ Niringiye, p. 149.

²⁰ Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel

influence on Christian theology in Nigeria and Africa.

He is one of the pioneers of African theology. Dr. Lugira claims that it was Professor E. Bolaji Idowu who first seriously challenged Africans to produce theologies that would meet the spiritual needs of the Africans. Since his call, numerous books have been written and many conferences and consultations have been held on the subject of African theology.²¹ He is one of the leading African Christian theologians.²²

Professor Idowu concentrates his efforts on the study of the Yoruba religion. He says that a meaningful and profitable study in African theology can only be done by concentrating on only one culture. The smaller the area covered the better and deeper the study. This is because African cultures and societies are vast and diverse.

Idowu's Perception of ATR: In order to avoid the pitfalls of prejudice and preconceived notions which inhibit learning, Idowu said, he adopted an objective attitude in the study of the Yoruba religion. The book, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, his doctoral dissertation published in 1962, is basically a description of the Yoruba concept of God. In it, Idowu sought to understand the religion of the Yoruba 'from the inside' and so learn from them what they know and believe with regards to the supreme matter of religion.²³

Idowu has written two other books and many articles on the relationship between Christianity and African traditional religion. His second book, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, published in 1965, was the outcome of a series of talks given on radio in Nigeria. It was basically a challenge to the Nigerian Church to become independent of Western influence. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, his third and last book, was published in 1973. In this book he argues that the African's experience of the reality of God is most faithfully

Publishing House, 1975), p. 27.

²¹ Niringiye, p. 15.

²² Bruce Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 202.

²³ E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 5.

mediated by the various forms of the traditional religion native to the African cultural situation. Besides these books, he has written scores of articles and contributed chapters to many books.

Demarest says that Idowu's earlier outlook could be broadly considered as evangelical. During this period, 1950s and 1960s, Idowu insisted that Christianity was the definitive religion. Idowu's overriding concern during these earlier years was to create an indigenous African Church that would be truly free to acknowledge the Lordship of the eternal Christ, who alone is preeminent."²⁴ He says, during this period, Idowu believed that the Church ought to bear the unmistakable stamp of the fact that she is the church of God in Nigeria. Idowu also believed that Christian teachings need to be supplemented with traditional religious beliefs. We will examine if this is a correct reading of Idowu.

Idowu strongly believes that religion evolved. He says that the supersensible world is beyond our full comprehension. God is understood by each culture according to its own abilities. Therefore, every culture has some contributions to make. Thus, we must accept what the Yoruba has to contribute to the larger realm of apprehension of spiritual things. This was his opinion in his third book, *African Traditional Religion*. He more clearly states it when he says,

To the reflective, contemplative or speculative, the method of abstraction may lead to the goal of spiritual satisfaction. But they are a minority. To the remaining majority, fundamental truths can only be grasped when they are presented in descriptive patterns – in pictures, in something concrete, at least – in the form of a modelled figure.²⁵

He says, whether we try to articulate God abstractly or through concrete images the goal is the same. He states his belief that the Yoruba religion would evolve to a point where it would no longer need to use images in worship. However, because a people uses images, he says, does not mean that they have nothing to contribute to the knowledge of God.

²⁴ Demarest, p. 203.

²⁵ E. Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 65.

Here Idowu tries to analyse how each culture or religion comprehends or articulates spiritual realities. The full implication of Idowu's position is more clearly seen when he says that every religion goes through the "crude form" of using images. As "man advances in knowledge and attains clearer spiritual vision, he could grow above this kind of material aid to his beliefs. Among the Yoruba, the crude or absurd emblems will certainly pass away with the passage of time."²⁶ In this way Idowu states quite clearly his commitment to an evolutionary concept of religion. If the argument is valid, and if the reality we are talking about is the same and if the premises are open to human scrutiny, we will then be forced to agree with his position. However, we believe that Christianity is qualitatively different from other religions in its claims and assertions. The major issue at stake is not the process of the development of religion as much as the content.

Revelation or theophany is evidenced, says Idowu, through the created order and man's inner link with deity. He is, however, very clear that God chooses to reveal himself to us through his creatures and without this there would be no revelation. "Revelation is basically a matter of divine initiative."²⁷ On this he is right. He quotes Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology* to support his position: "Natural knowledge about self and world... can lead to the question of the ground of being ... the question asked by reason, but reason cannot answer it. Revelation can answer it."²⁸

The probable reason why Idowu sees all religions as leading us to God is that he does not differentiate between general revelation and special revelation. In fact, created order and man's inner link could all be seen as general revelation in which case he does not have a special revelation – the redemptive history of Israel and the supreme revelation in Jesus Christ.

It is no surprise when Idowu says all men are trying to apprehend the same God, bearing in mind his concept of the evolution of religion without content. Furthermore, he asserts that we cannot talk about 'the God of Africa' since there is only one God. He calls the use of the phrase, 'the God of Africa', a political invention that springs from the

²⁶ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 66.

²⁷ E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion*, p. 57.

²⁸ Idowu, *ATR*, p. 56, and Tillich, p. 133.

European's racio-centric concept of God. The closest he comes to putting all of his ideas together is when he says:

We find that in every age and generation, there is a direct contact of God with the human soul, the personal awareness of God on the part of man through God's own initiative. What man knows of God, what he discovers about God, comes as a result of this self-disclosure.²⁹

We agree with Idowu that the initiative in revelation is with God. If he does not reveal himself to us, there is no way we can know anything about him. But we profoundly disagree with him when he says that there is a direct contact between God and all men. By this he implies a contact that guarantees a genuine knowledge of God. In all of his assertions, Idowu does not state his source or the basis of his argument. Idowu says,

There is no place, age, or generation, which did not receive at some point in its history some form of revelation, and that to deny this fact is either to be deliberately blind to facts or to betray a gross ignorance of facts.³⁰

Therefore, theologians cannot afford to be narrow-minded. Though he strongly affirms that God has revealed himself to all people, he does not tell us how we can be sure that the revelation is actually of God himself and not merely human formulations.

Since the Yoruba religion affects all of life, it must be personal and pragmatic. If it is none of these, it would not have been able to have the kind of wide and tenacious impact on the Yoruba that it does. Worship in general is an imperative urge in man, says Idowu. When confronted by the "numinous" reality, man responds instinctively with worship. "In the life of the Yoruba, worship as an imperative factor stands out prominently. As a deeply religious people, worship for them begins, controls, and ends all the affairs of life."³¹ For the Yoruba, worship is done through rituals and liturgies.

The Yorubas believe that Olodumare, the Deity, is the origin and the

²⁹ Idowu, *A T R*, p. 56.

³⁰ Idowu, *A T R*, p. 140.

³¹ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 107-108.

ground of all that is.³² However, questions about the origins of Olodumare himself are considered the dangerous beginning of irreverent inquisitiveness. He is believed to be eternally existent. It is upon this basic fact, says Idowu, that the whole superstructure of Yoruba belief rests.³³ He believes that we can come to a true knowledge of the eternal Godhead and attributes of God as we study a people's concept of God because God has never left himself without a witness anywhere in his world.³⁴ Idowu more succinctly states his position when he said,

God is one, not many; and that to the one God belongs the earth and all its fullness. It is this God, therefore, who reveals Himself to every people on earth and whom they have apprehended according to the degree of their spiritual perception, expressing their knowledge of Him... It would be looking at facts through the spectacles of cultural pride and affected superiority to deny this; it would be blasphemous to say that while the loving God cared for a particular section of His world, He had nothing in a clear, unmistakable way, to say to, or do with the rest.³⁵

These statements, it seems, are addressed against the Christian concept of revelation.³⁶ Idowu does not seem to show an understanding of the basis on which Christianity claims the unique kind of revelation it does. The claim of Christianity to an exclusive special revelation cannot be appreciated without fully considering the doctrine of creation and the fall. It does not bother him that to append anything to these exclusive claims is to deny the claims themselves or to be syncretistic.

Idowu says that Olodumare is of vital, absolutely indispensable, significance to the Yoruba. "The ultimate origin of such a lofty conception can be none other than the revelation of the living God

³² Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 18.

³³ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 18.

³⁴ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 30. This is one of Idowu's favorite statements. He makes this statement more than once in this book and in all of his other books.

³⁵ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 31.

³⁶ Idowu had elsewhere expressed his displeasure with the Christian monopoly of the name "Theology", a claim to the exclusive knowledge of God. See "Faiths in Interaction" *Orita* 4:2 (December 1970):100 for his discussion on exclusivist claims by various religions.

Himself Who has never left Himself without a witness in any generation."³⁷

It is appropriate to probe Idowu's concept of revelation deeper because all of his work is built on the assumption that God has revealed Himself to every group of people in the world. We should ask Idowu, did God reveal himself to every tribe or do tribes perceive him themselves in nature? Idowu's position on this question is not clear. He said, "what man knows of God, what he discovers about God, comes as a result of this self-disclosure."³⁸ He thus places the initiative with God. Is it right to conclude that what the Yorubas say about God is God's perfect revelation? Idowu would appear to say yes to this. I agree that God has revealed himself if this is a reference to general revelation. But as we noted earlier, Idowu collapses the distinction between general and special revelation. For him there is only one revelation.

We should further ask, 'Is Idowu's assumption right or do the Yoruba have a knowledge of God because they are made in his image?' If God gave special revelation of himself to the Yoruba, then it must necessarily be a complete or adequate revelation to lead to salvation because of God's nature. This brings out the reason why Idowu is considered a universalist by Byang Kato in the book, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*.

We agree with Idowu that the revelation of God is given to men by God himself. The priority is with God. However, we disagree with Idowu that God has given special revelation of Himself to the Yoruba. He quotes the Bible passage that says that God has not left himself without a witness. The problems with his position are at least two. First, he quotes this passage out of context as he does many others. Second, if God truly revealed Himself to the Yoruba with special revelation, then God is establishing different ways of being reconciled to Himself. This being the case, Christianity automatically becomes falsified because of Jesus' claims of being the only way to God in John 14:6 and 1 Timothy 2:3-6.

³⁷ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 204.

³⁸ Idowu, *ATR*, p. 56.

Intermediaries:

Intermediaries are an indispensable aspect of Yoruba religion and indeed ATR. Idowu accepts Rudolf Otto's description of man's religious situation as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* – that which bewilders, terrifies, frightens, spells danger, but yet attracts and invites with a "beckoning" which is tantamount to absolute demand.³⁹ The need for a mediator arises out of this unique experience of the Holy. It also arises because the reality that man has to deal with is not a vague abstraction but a reality with the attributes of a person. Therefore, man needs something to mediate between them. This led to the ideas of the divinities which in the Yoruba religion number anywhere from 201 to 1700.⁴⁰ Due to the reality of the divinities in Yoruba religion, many of the worshippers have considered them as ends in themselves instead of means to an end – which they technically are in Yoruba theology.⁴¹ Idowu clearly shows that the Yoruba religion worships only God while the divinities are merely venerated. He claims that the Yoruba religion should be properly referred to as "diffused monotheism" and not idol worship or polytheism. Polytheism, especially "proper polytheism", does not apply to the religion of the Yoruba, he adds.⁴² These divinities, he says, serve the will of Olodumare in the creation and theocratic government of the world.

Though the Yoruba bow down before the emblems of their divinities, which may be things made of wood and stone, yet they do not bow down to wood and stone.⁴³ This is the means by which the Yoruba make the spiritual perceptible – through the material or the symbol, says Idowu. It is their attempt to give a visible and tangible evidence of that which is invisible, intangible and spiritual entity.

There is some inconsistency in Idowu's ideas. In pages 63 and 64 of *Olodumare* as quoted above, he tells us clearly that in Yoruba theology, "technically" the divinities are not worshipped but later in page 68, he says that they are worshipped under several names. It is

³⁹ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 129. See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of The Holy*, (London: O.U.P., 1943), chapters 4-6.

⁴⁰ Idowu, *ATR*, p. 172.

⁴¹ Idowu, *ATR*, p. 63.

⁴² Idowu, *ATR*, p. 58.

⁴³ Idowu, *ATR*, p. 64.

very difficult to understand the way in which he is using the word 'worship'. Furthermore, he admits himself that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between worship and veneration.

Idowu advised us to approach the study of the Yoruba religion and every other African religion with him objectively without any presuppositions. He also stated that the Yoruba have a concept of God and divinities but that the former is the object of worship. We noted that his description of the Yoruba religion is faulty because the claim on which it rests – God has revealed himself to every people – cannot be substantiated.⁴⁴

The Enigma of *Towards an Indigenous Church*:

The book, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, was the outcome of a series of three broadcast talks that Idowu gave on radio in Nigeria. This book is very difficult to fit into all of Idowu's ideas, as we have discovered in his first and third book. The ideas are totally alien and would have been termed apocryphal had they been published posthumously. The reason for this is evident.

Idowu says, "Christianity is the means by which the living, loving Father seeks to save His world and give His children true life, life truly more abundant."⁴⁵ By indigenization Idowu meant simply that,

The Church should bear the unmistakable stamp of the fact that she is the church of God in Nigeria. It should be no longer an out-reach or a colony of Rome, Canterbury, Westminster Central Hall in London, or the vested interest of some European or American Missionary Board. No longer should it be an institution acknowledging a human overlord elsewhere outside Nigeria; no longer a marionette with its strings in the hands of some foreign manipulators.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ We want to point out that we define revelation the way Idowu defines it. Idowu equates revelation with salvation. Therefore, when we say God did not reveal Himself to the Yoruba, we speak of revelation *ala* Idowu. For Idowu, there is no distinction between general and special revelation.

⁴⁵ Idowu, *Towards an Indigenous Church*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 8.

⁴⁶ Idowu, *TIC*, p. 11.

Idowu's talks at length about what he means by indigenization because it is a word used by different people. By indigenization he does not mean, either, that there should be a change in the staffing of the church in such a way that all her European or American staff should be automatically replaced with Nigerians nor quit their posts. He thinks it is necessary to emphasize this point, especially as the feeling is growing among Europeans and American ministers and many church workers that since Nigeria is now independent she may no longer want them. Idowu strongly asserts that,

May the day never come when the Church in Nigeria would say that she does not want pastors and teachers from other countries as co-workers with Nigerian colleagues. It should be the earnest longing of the church that the church of God throughout the world may so realize her one-ness that there shall be a reciprocal interchange of workers everywhere.⁴⁷

Idowu says that if the Church attempts to eliminate all foreign elements it will cease to be a living cell within the whole body of Jesus, the Universal Church. The Church must stress the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Total and undivided allegiance must be paid him no matter what the cost. The main point Idowu is making is that "the only authority which should have the pre-eminence over and govern the life of the church in Nigeria is Jesus Christ; and it is time Christian Nigerians were allowed to hear his voice and interpret his will for themselves."⁴⁸ Idowu says that indigenization in the church is not to be seen as Nigerianization of the civil service. We feel that Idowu clearly communicates what he means by an indigenous church. There is nothing to add except to point out that it is very evident that Idowu sees an African Church structure as a must for an indigenous Church.

The indigenous Church must be a Church whose life is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "An indigenous Church in Nigeria must know and live in the watchful consciousness that she is part of as well as the 'presence' of the 'One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church'"⁴⁹ says

⁴⁷ Idowu, *TIC*, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Idowu, *TIC*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Idowu, *TIC*, p. 11.

Idowu. Idowu has a very organic view of the Church. He says that the Nigerian Church as an organic cell belonging to the whole body partakes of certain characteristics which belong to that Body. It shares in various forms as common heredity with other cognate cells. Thus she maintains not only the 'faith once delivered to the saints' but also certain inevitable elements which have become in various forms integral marks of the life of the visible church.⁵⁰

He does not refer to the content of the gospel as being offensive. He is only concerned with the context and method of presentation of the gospel. He also does not blame the missionaries as having consciously engaged themselves in enslaving the African minds. He says that they used the only method known to them and that from this there was a 'miscarriage of purpose'. So it was not a deliberate mistake.

On the basis of the Bible taken as a whole, however, there can be only one answer. There is only one God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them; the God who has never left Himself without witness in any nation, age, or generation; whose creative purpose has ever been at work in this world; Who by one stupendous act of climactic self-revelation in Christ Jesus came to redeem a fallen world.⁵¹

He also says that though God may be known imperfectly, we can assert that he is known in Nigerian religions. This is what makes possible a point of contact whereby Nigerians can talk about God.

There is some truth to this statement. We also assert that we cannot avoid some carry over into Christianity from African Traditional Religion since the traditional name for God is used in the Church. Definitely, concepts of God are transferred from African Traditional Religion to Christianity by the converts. There must be some commonality between the two concepts of God. We believe that the reason why there is the knowledge of God in African Traditional Religion, however, is not due to a revelation given by God. It is, rather, due to the fact that He is the Creator. As men look at creation and the order in the world, coupled with the fact that they are made in the image of God, they arrive at a concept of God.

⁵⁰ Idowu, *TIC*, pp. 11-12.

⁵¹ Idowu, *TIC*, p. 25.

Idowu says that the Church in Nigeria, and indeed Africa, will die if it does not become indigenous. This was the reason why the Church in North Africa failed to survive. That also was the reason why the first attempt in the fifteenth century to Christianize Africa failed.

In order for a truly indigenous theology to be done in Africa, Idowu says, African theologians must apprehend African spiritual values with the African mind. They must also possess the requisite knowledge of the fundamental facts of the faith which they are seeking to express and disseminate in indigenous idioms.⁵² By this he means African theologians must be Christians and then truly sympathetic to their culture in order to do a genuinely African theology. It is evident why we consider this work enigmatic.

EVALUATION OF BOLAJI IDOWU

The one major concern with Idowu's works is that he begins with presuppositions which he did not substantiate in any way. Idowu has been acclaimed as an African theologian. But his position, as we have seen so far, does not accept the presupposition upon which Christianity is built.⁵³ Therefore, we cannot say that he is a Christian theologian. Since his theology is built on some different presuppositions, it is mandatory for him to substantiate them. Idowu makes two major claims which he did not substantiate. First, he says that there is only one God and not different Gods for different peoples. Secondly, he says that the revelation of the Yoruba has been vouchsafed to them by God.

In his work, *Olodumare* for example, Idowu says that his purpose is "to begin to look more closely at the ways in which the Yoruba have obtained and interpreted the revelation which has been vouchsafed to them by the Deity Himself."⁵⁴ Nowhere does he attempt to state why he believes there is only one God and how he arrived at the fact that God has revealed himself to the Yoruba and that the revelation that the Yoruba has comes from God. If Idowu's two claims are true, then the

⁵² Idowu, *TIC*, p. xi.

⁵³ Christianity states that Christian revelation – God's acts in Jesus Christ – is God's definitive and final revelation to the world. Idowu does not accept this. This is just one instance but the most significant.

⁵⁴ Idowu, *Olodumare*, p. 32.

Yoruba religion or African Traditional Religion in general has a valid and legitimate way back to God. This implication of Idowu's position is crucial and makes it necessary to discover how it is arrived at.

Idowu's position has far and deep reaching implications for Christianity. In fact, it undercuts Christianity entirely because in John 14:6, Jesus says that no man can come to the Father (God) except through Him (Jesus). In 1 Timothy 2:5,6, Paul says, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time." These Bible passages are at the heart of the Christian faith. They cannot be eliminated from an orthodox Christian faith. These passages make exclusive claims that cannot be reconciled with Idowu's presuppositions. Either the Biblical claim is right and Idowu is wrong or vice-versa.

Idowu follows "Brunner, Baillie, and De Wolf to argue that revelation, or 'theophany,' consists of a personal encounter between God and the human soul."⁵⁵ Idowu says God reveals himself to men in two ways: "first, through the natural phenomena of the visible cosmos; and second, through man's inner link with Deity."⁵⁶ He insists that God's revelation entrusted to the African soul is sufficient for the salvation of the Africans. Therefore, the African should not repudiate the rich spiritual heritage that God has granted his ancestors in traditional religion.

Our concern here is dual: the position Idowu holds and his inability to substantiate it. He does not say how God reveals himself through the natural phenomenon nor through this "inner link with the Deity," to make it sufficient for salvation, Idowu probably fails to see the need to substantiate his claims because he does not have an adequate enough distinction between faith and theology. His works (*Olodumare* and *African Traditional Religion*) started out as descriptions of the Yoruba religion and African Traditional Religion. The point of transition in his works from description to a theological formulation is not clearly outlined. On this note there is a similarity between Idowu and his mentor at Cambridge, Dr. E. Geoffrey Parrinder.

⁵⁵ Demarest, p. 204.

⁵⁶ Demarest, p. 204.

Another problem with Idowu's works is that his foundational ideas are borrowed Western concepts. This is a problem because for Idowu, one of the requirements of African theology – the African expression of the faith – is that it must be shorn of all traces of Western colonial influence. The tragedy of Africa, as he observed, is that it has sold its soul to alien European traditions. However, in constructing his system of religion, he violates one of his own principles. Idowu's theology is built on the foundation laid by Kant, Schleiermacher, and Tillich. Also, his views on revelation are heavily indebted to insights from Brunner, Baillie, and DeWolf as we have noted earlier. And his conception of religion as ineffable experience has been borrowed point for point from the Europeans Otto and Eliade. There is no doubt that if the European elements were excised from Idowu's theology, it would collapse and come tonought.⁵⁷

One of the foundational ideas in Idowu's work is taken from Acts 14:17. This passage says that God has not left himself without a witness. This passage Idowu uses to back his claim that God has revealed himself to the Yorubas. This biblical passage is very basic to Idowu's theology.

According to Idowu, African Traditional Religions are complete, self-sufficient, and adequate for the Africans. Therefore, it ought not to borrow foreign ideas. He discourages Africans from using foreign ideas to explain African realities. Ironically, Idowu's foundational ideas for his theology are borrowed from Christianity and the West. Without these foundational ideas, Idowu's system ceases to be. He builds all of his arguments on these ideas without substantiating them or saying how they apply to African Traditional Religion. He, thus, implies that these sources are authoritative. Therefore, his work fails to meet the standard he himself set.

In addition, the foundational Scripture passages Idowu uses are quoted out of context. For example, one of the recurrent passages in all of his works is Acts 14:17 which says that God has not left himself without a witness. From this passage he argues that God has revealed himself to Africans in as valid a way as he has in the Bible.

⁵⁷ Demarest, p. 208.

Idowu's adoption of this passage lies on faulty exegesis. Acts 14: 16-17 in the New English Bible say, "In past ages he allowed all nations to go their own way: and yet he has not left you without some clue to his nature, in the kindness he shows". The clue of his nature is the kindness he shows. This is not a reference to special revelation, where God communicates with man directly, but to general revelation which comes through nature. He quotes this and many other passages out of context.⁵⁸ Even if Idowu believes that his interpretation is correct, he ought to state how he derives it because this verse is the foundation of his position.

We are not the only ones who are perplexed by Idowu's interpretation. Kato critiques that Idowu's use of Scriptures gives the impression that he does not take the context seriously. Kato says, "By what principle of exegesis Idowu arrives at such a conclusion is hard to tell."⁵⁹

He made the fundamental mistake of confusing God's revelation in nature and the conscience with the special and redemptive revelation.⁶⁰ Thus, he wrongly assumes that the former has salvific potency. Consequently, Idowu, just like other African theologians,⁶¹ cannot avoid drawing more heavily from African Traditional Religion than from the Bible and the Christian tradition.

Many African theologians pay only lip service to the significance of the Bible for their theology. They hardly ever state how they intend to or by what criteria they will use it. This quotation from Mbiti reveals the general attitude of African theologians. He says, about God's activities in the world that:

He (God) must have been active among African peoples as he was among Jewish people. Did he then reveal himself only in the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel and other personalities in the Bible? ... The

⁵⁸ Kato, *Pitfalls*, pp. 113-117.

⁵⁹ Kato, p. 97.

⁶⁰ See preceding section.

⁶¹ Niringiye says, "Mbiti draws more from African traditional religions than Biblical Theology ... he inappropriately emphasizes the revelation in creation over the special-historical revelation." Niringiye, p. 142.

more I (Mbiti) peeped into African religious insights about God, the more I felt utterly unable to use the word "only" in this case.⁶²

Another problem with Idowu's position is his denial or rejection of any kind of normative revelation. Idowu's religious language is basically non-cognitive. He implies that religious language is not a vehicle of truth. It expresses and elicits a people's religious experience. All people have an equally valid experience of God. This is the reason why he clearly states that the Yoruba religion and African Traditional Religions in general are God's vouchsafed revelation to the Africans. Every religion is actually a different cultural expression. Therefore, no religion has an exclusive claim to the truth.

Idowu's position implies that no religion conveys a normative truth. The problem with this view is that in denying that any revelation is normative, it makes a normative and conclusive statement about revelation. The statement that there is no normative revelation is not value-free; it is value-laden.

The similarity between African Traditional Religions and Biblical revelation should not lead to the assumption that both religions are equal. But rather, the similarity helps confirm God's revelation and the Christ-event. African Traditional Religion is a shadow of the Biblical revelation but not a shadow in the way in which the Old Testament is. African Traditional Religion has a valid knowledge of God's creation from general revelation. However, contrary to Idowu's assumption, this is not sufficient for salvation.

Despite the similarity between African Traditional Religion and Biblical revelation, there is a fundamental difference between the two in their conception of sin and salvation.

We agree with Idowu that Christianity should not destroy our Africanness but affirm and fulfill it but only where our Africanness is in continuity with the Scriptures. But we still must say that the Scriptures have supremacy and do judge the African Traditional Religion and culture in the same manner that they judge Western and all world cultures. However, we need to distinguish the relative elements (cultural elements in the Scriptures) from the normative

⁶² Niringiye, p. 145.

elements (God's revelation). This was what the disciples strived to achieve in their efforts to take Christianity to other cultures.

Even if we grant that Idowu's interpretations of the Scriptures are correct, his position is still accompanied by very drastic implications and consequences. Idowu's theology, we believe, does not address man's sin seriously enough. It assumes that man's sin can be easily overlooked, forgiven or settled with God whichever way man chooses. In Idowu's system, it is man who lays down the terms of atonement.

Idowu says that every religion is always evolving and changing. African Traditional Religion, he believes, would soon evolve a way of atoning for sins similar to that Christianity. On this point, he is of the opinion that the Christian atonement of sins is the result of men's ingenuity. It is not a way ordained by God but by man. Therefore, it cannot be the only way. Though indirectly, Idowu's position assumes that man can atone for his sins. This, of course, is contrary to what the Bible teaches in Ephesians 2:1, 4-6, 8. In these passages we read that we were dead in our transgressions when God sent his Son Jesus to die for our sins.⁶³

Idowu does not see the significance of the Christ-event in Christianity. It follows necessarily that the historical dimension is not significant for his theology. Without this dimension, Christianity loses its uniqueness and distinction. It becomes just like one of the many religions that exist.

It is obvious why Idowu neglects the historical dimension. He believes that all religions are equal which seek to explain their experience of "the idea of the holy." He sees Jesus in Christianity as the genius and peak of the development of Christianity. As all religions continue to evolve, they will arrive at such a point. Idowu is, therefore, a universalist because he believes all religions will lead to the same destination. We believe that Idowu's view here results from his failure to distinguish between special and general revelation as we noted in the previous section.

Throughout this paper, one of our emphasis has been that the kind of African theology we advocate or seek to develop is one that is first Christian then African, and not vice-versa. If it is primarily Christian,

⁶³ See Romans 5:6 & 8.

then it must agree with Christian orthodox beliefs and have something to contribute to the universal Church.

African Christian Theology is not called to particularize the Christian faith but to adapt it and even go beyond that to incarnate it. The African church is, therefore, to contribute her experience to the universal experience of the Church. Shorter sums it up well when he said:

The most important thing that should be said about African Christianity is that it is Christian. It is not enough to be African, for this is to fall into the pitfall of particularism... either syncretism or a closed system.⁶⁴

This is the error of Idowu's position. If African theology is to be Christian, it must accept all of the orthodox (fundamental and basic) teachings of Christianity, most especially issues like sin, atonement, Trinity, and the historicity of the complete Christ-event.

However, Christianity in Africa must avoid the danger of alienating itself through failing to engage in a conscious dialogue with African Traditional Religion. It is possible to concentrate on the orthodox teachings of the Christian faith to the negligence of the African cultural elements. The African elements would provide the metaphysical structure to organize and present the Christian truth to the African mind.

In order for Christianity to become indigenous, its conceptual framework and world view must be African. This, of course, means hard work for the African theologian. He must engage in constant dialogue because no theology (the formulation and not the basic teachings or beliefs) is normative for all generations. He must, however, remain within the orthodox Christian tradition.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article is to show the significance of an African religious language for African theology. The future of African Christianity lies in an African theology that dialogues with other

⁶⁴ Shorter, p. 21.

theologies. It asserts itself and contributes to the universal Christian theology.

But for such a theology to emerge, we must distinguish the gospel from the cultural framework within which it is transmitted. This distinction would help us to know what in Christianity can be replaced with African cultural elements. This is the first step in developing a genuinely African Christian Theology. Secondly and probably more importantly, is the process of making the Christian message comprehensible to the Africans and allowing them to express their experience of it. This is the framework within which the Christian gospel ought to be presented. The significance of an African religious language for African Christian Theology cannot be overemphasized. Herein is the future of African Christian Theology and indeed African Christianity.

Demarest is right to observe two positions in Idowu's thought – one evangelical and the other liberal. However, his explanation that Idowu's writings demonstrated movement from an evangelical to a liberal position is not convincing. It is primarily untenable because the book that is clearly evangelical is his middle book, *Towards an Indigenous Church*. I do not doubt that Idowu began from a clearly evangelical Christian position. But I believe that the shift to a liberal position had already been made in *Olodumare* his first book. The riddle of *Toward an Indigenous Church* is solved, I believe, if one knows that it originated as a series of radio talks. The audience of these lectures would be mostly the laity who are very conservative in their beliefs. Idowu in the lectures spoke in the language they would understand.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, I have argued that non-formal theology is more conservative than the formal.

Most definitions by Africans of African Christian Theology and the efforts of theologising attempt to establish continuity between Christianity and African Traditional Religions. These kinds of

⁶⁵ This is not particularly strange because such ambivalence has been noted in scholars like Bultmann whose sermons have been noted as strongly evangelical except for those who know Bultmann's presupposition. His *New Testament Theology* is more evangelical when compared to his other technical works like *Jesus and the World* (1934), *History and Eschatology* (1951) and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1958).

approaches and efforts are not true to the scriptures because these attempts presuppose spiritual life, growth and a healthy relationship with God in Africa. This presupposition undercuts the significance of the work of Jesus Christ because the Scriptures say that we were spiritually dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1-3) when Jesus died for us. Not even one person was seeking God (Romans 3:10). All have sinned says the Scripture.

It is not only the Africans but the whole world that stands before God condemned. Therefore, we would assert that any attempt to establish continuity between African Religions and Christianity is wrong--as long as this continuity equates the revelation of the African Traditional Religions with the revelation we have in Jesus Christ. It is, however, right to point out that there are redeemable aspects in the African culture. These do not presuppose continuity but a point of contact. When the first man fell into sin he would have been totally destroyed except for the grace of God. Leo George Cox says that when man sinned,

the life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God-righteousness and true holiness. But the natural image was marred, not destroyed... So in this sense, apart from grace, man's fall was complete and all was lost... Man is totally helpless in himself to do anything for himself. There is no way that he can initiate one move toward God by himself except for grace man would have been left helpless, lost, and forever apart from God.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Leo George Cox. *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964), pp. 29-30.

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THE THEOLOGICAL LEGACY OF THE REVEREND DOCTOR *BYANG HENRY KATO*

Yusufu Turaki

The tragic and untimely death of Rev. Dr. Byango Kato, the evangelical spokesman in the 1970s, has not diminished his influence on the churches in Africa. His voice continues to be heard through his publications which are still read today as through the graduate schools founded through him.

This article by Rev. Professor Yusufu Turaki was an address given on December 2, 2000 as part of the thanksgiving commemoration for the life of Dr. Kato, held in Jos, Nigeria, on the 25th anniversary of his death.

Though Dr. Kato was a Nigerian from West Africa, he was a man of God with whom we all identified. He was concerned with some of the same theological issues which concern AJET and Scott Theological College. When preparations for Scott graduation were being made in 1975 our graduation speaker suddenly sent his apologies. Though extremely busy and weary in body, Dr. Kato agreed to speak at the Scott graduation the latter part of November. Just two weeks later the Lord called him home when he drowned on the south coast of Kenya while on holiday. Though dead, he continues to speak to us all.

In considering the theological legacy of the Reverend Doctor Byang Henry Kato, I wish to reflect on Byang Kato first as a Christian theologian, and then more briefly on him as a Christian leader, and as a Christian.

BYANG KATO AS A THEOLOGIAN

Byang Kato was shaped by several distinguished theological institutions: ECWA Theological Seminary Igbaja, London Bible College, and Dallas Theological Seminary. Throughout his

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educational career he was a brilliant student and was always at the top of his class. He became the finest theological mind that the evangelicals in Africa had, and the first champion of evangelical theology and of the evangelical cause in Africa. Opponents revered and feared him, while colleagues revered and envied him. His grasp of African theological issues and his forceful presentation of his arguments singled him out. He was never afraid of standing alone, and spoke with a prophetic voice for the continent. Kato's death in a tragic drowning accident in 1975 on the Mombasa coast in Kenya was a severe blow to the Church in Africa and indeed in the world, but God used it to honour His name. Kato was a theological leader with a vision and with an agenda for evangelicals in Africa. Let me attempt to outline something of his theological legacy.

Questions on Salvation and the Uniqueness of Christ

The question of salvation in Jesus Christ became quite prominent on the African continent in the 1960s and early 1970s. The influential works of Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti and others on the one hand, and those of Byang Kato and Tokunboh Adeyemo on the other hand, generated theological debates on the question of salvation in African traditional religions and the uniqueness of Christ for salvation. Similar debates still rage on. For example, Kwame Bediako's writings on African Christianity are significant and shed more light for our understanding of the nature and the agenda of African Theology. He has clearly defined the meaning, contours, trends and patterns of African Theology which have been very helpful for our understanding of Kato's theological legacy. The primary objective of Kato's Theological Corpus vis-à-vis that of his opponents was to develop a biblical foundation for proclaiming Jesus as the only valid, authentic and unique Saviour of the whole world and Mediator between God and man.

This discussion was particularly interesting to African theological scholars. The discussions were always dominated by the questions of "salvation" and "intermediaries" in African traditional religions, and how to relate the Gospel of Christ to the African traditional religious worldview. The crucial theological issue is the fact that the Christian concept of salvation in Jesus Christ is

paralleled in African traditional religions. In the African traditional religions God has important "intermediaries" or "mediators" between Himself and man, as it is the case with Jesus in Christianity. If indeed God has instituted a valid means of salvation and appropriate intermediaries within the African traditional religions, as is suggested, then the logical conclusion is that "Africans have no need of the Christian offer of salvation and mediatorship in Jesus Christ". I have personally met an African scholar who, having considered these theological issues, had decided to become a "priest" of the African traditional religions. The dominant presence of the African traditional religions and their powerful religious worldview have ever posed great challenges to the presentation of the Gospel of Christ and the rooting of Christianity in Africa. African theological scholars are divided in both their methodologies and their interpretations of what constitutes Africa's traditional religions and how the Gospel of Christ should be presented in Africa. Kato's Theological Corpus addressed this very issue.

Since the rise of African Theology in the late 1950s, the contentious issue of the possible "plurality" in the means of salvation and mediatorship between God and man has dominated African theological discourse. The theological question is whether our African Christian understanding of African traditional religions calls into question our Christian belief that Jesus is the only valid, authentic, unique and universal Saviour and Mediator between God and man. If it does, then the African traditional religions have succeeded in evangelising Christianity to believe and accept their claims to be equally valid with Christianity, and hence Christianity need no longer evangelise African traditional religions or present the Gospel of Christ to them. "What is the place of Jesus Christ within the context of African traditional religions?" "How has Jesus the Messiah been treated by African scholars and theologians?" These questions are in themselves missiological questions to which Christianity in Africa must provide concrete answers, or else Christianity stands in danger of being evangelised by African traditional religions. The acceptance of Jesus varies in Africa, from mild acceptance to total rejection. In extreme cases some African

theological scholars are of the opinion that Christianity must abandon its biblical and historical claims that salvation is found only in the unique Christ, and must accept the plurality of the means of salvation, which are also found sufficiently in other religions. These are the theological issues which Kato sought to address, especially in his doctoral dissertation, published as *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Kato states,

The stage is well set for universalism in Africa. Universalism means the belief that all men will eventually be saved whether they believe in Christ or not. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that a serious study be undertaken to reveal the trends already taking shape. (Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, 1975, p. 11).

Kato defined his theological agenda in the following words,

The primary purpose of this book is to sound an alarm and warn Christians on both sides of the argument concerning the dangers of universalism. These dangers are theological pitfalls indeed. To forewarn is to forearm. The noble desire to indigenize Christianity in Africa must not be forsaken. An indigenous theology is a necessity. But must one betray Scriptural principles of God and His dealings with man at the altar of any regional theology? Should human sympathy and rationalism override what is clearly taught in the Scriptures? Many voices in Africa and outside the continent are answering these questions in the affirmative. Their number is increasing rapidly. That is why I wish here to alert Christians to these pertinent dangers (Kato, *op. cit.*, p. 16).

The pertinent dangers referred to by Kato are related to the wider ongoing debates elsewhere in the world about religious pluralism and the question of salvation within the non-Christian religions of the world. Serious questions have been raised about the possibility of salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ. Our African experience is only a part of this universal debate whether Jesus Christ and the Bible are uniquely valid for all.

The debates on salvation and the intermediaries in African traditional religions, and on religious pluralism in general, have raised serious doubts on Christian commitment to the biblical and the historical fact that in "Jesus Christ, through his life, death,

resurrection and coming again, salvation has been made available to all humankind" (Gnanakan 1992:21). It is this commitment to biblical truth, apostolic teachings and the historic witness of the church that Kato wanted to restate and emphasise.

In the first place, our Lord Himself made some categorical statements about His message of salvation within the context of Jewish monotheism and the plural religions and cultures of the Roman Empire. Secondly, God through His Holy Spirit moved the apostles to proclaim and write about the uniqueness of Jesus the Messiah as the universal Saviour and Mediator in the midst of Jewish monotheism and the plural religions and cultures of the Greco-Roman world. Christianity today can still make the same categorical claims about Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of the whole world, based on this biblical, apostolic and the historical testimony of the church.

The above debates have somewhat weakened our commitment, and have diverted our attention to new "beliefs" which are non-Christian and which also seek "justification in philosophy rather than theology" and "demand that we surrender our claims to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ" (Gnanakan 1992:160,125).

Questions on the Presentation of Christ in Africa

The second important set of issues that Kato addressed concerned the presentation of Jesus Christ to the non-Christian religions and cultures especially in Africa. Kato addressed the question how the Gospel of Christ and the uniqueness of Christ relate to the African traditional religions and cultures. He devoted much space to this issue in his two books: *African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith* and *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. The approaches and methodologies of African scholars differ quite remarkably. The question that needs to be raised is: "What theology and/or methodology can adequately relate the Gospel of Christ and the uniqueness of Christ to the African traditional religions and culture? How is Jesus understood by Africans who have only the prior understanding of the pre-Christian African traditional religious worldview?"

It is important to note that African religious worldview permits belief in many spirit beings. Implicit in this African religious system is acceptance that other religious systems or persons may be equally valid or even more so. Here we are dealing with a worldview which is "accommodative" and is capable of "domesticating" ideas and objects. Christian proclamation of Jesus the Messiah must be done in such a way that the entire African worldview and its culture and religion are addressed by biblical teachings. The Gospel of Christ addresses the totality of our Africanness. It is by this process that transformation and transvaluation of our religious worldview takes effect within the African context. The true meaning of Jesus being the one Mediator between God and man must be founded upon the biblical, apostolic and the historical testimony of the church. Our approach to these theological issues should be based on how Jesus Christ in biblical, apostolic and the historical witness addresses, confronts and transforms the world of religions and cultures. Kato's theological method sought to do exactly that in his two books just mentioned.

African scholars differ in terms of what they are looking for in their comparative study of Christianity and the African traditional religions. Some look for similarities or dissimilarities, commonalities, continuity or discontinuity. The underlying theological quest is for us to formulate a theology of religions which will deal with our world context and the "need to discover all that the Bible is saying" about world religions and cultures (Gnanakan, 1992:222,223; Kato, *African Cultural Revolution, and Theological Pitfalls*).

It is important that we consider the real issues at stake in this discussion. The New Testament presented Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of the whole world. Is this New Testament presentation still relevant today in the world of many religions and cultures? The apostolic and Christian traditions have historically proclaimed Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of the whole world. Throughout the centuries this presentation of Jesus has been subjected to severe criticism by the non-Christian religions and cultures. Today the notion of religious pluralism is raising serious questions regarding Christian evangelism and its presentation of the Gospel of Jesus the

Messiah. Plurality of religions and cultures means that none is unique or superior, that all are equal. On this account, conversion is a violation of the principle of pluralism or equality of all. When conversion does take place, it means that certain religious absolutes are deemed higher or superior to others which in the religion of pluralism is wrong. Kato foresaw this trend in his warnings against the theological dangers of incipient universalism.

The reaction of the non-Christian world is to relativise Christianity and make it at par with other religions. Thus, Christianity as a religion is still under the domain of the human religious commonality, and it should be treated as such. But from our understanding of the New Testament, and the apostolic and Christian traditions, it is Jesus who is the object of proclamation. It is the person of Jesus Christ, and not religion or culture, that is being presented, if Christianity is to be faithful to the mission and message of its Lord. It is true that in some cases Jesus Christ has been proclaimed as secondary to "culture" or "nationality" or "theology". It is this "cultural Christianity" that is being rightly attacked and criticised. Biblical Christianity does not proclaim culture or nationality but "Jesus Christ crucified". People do not have to abandon or change religion or culture as a prerequisite to belief in Jesus Christ. Instead, the religious and cultural people are invited to come to faith in Jesus from the platform of their religious and cultural backgrounds. A Jew, a Muslim, an African, a Buddhist or a Hindu does not need first to cease being a religious or cultural person before becoming a follower of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus calls people to become His followers from different religions, cultures and backgrounds. Jesus calls us from our religions and cultures to follow Him as both Lord and Saviour. In the biblical presentation of salvation the primary focus is not change of religion or culture or "religious conversion", but turning to believe in Jesus. Conversion to "Christianity" is not even called for, but rather belief in Christ and Him alone. Christianity is a religious or cultural manifestation of this belief in Jesus Christ. Christianity is a "material" culture which grows out of the consequence of faith in Jesus. This religious outfit, this "Cultural Christianity", may or may not conform to the norms, mission and message of its Lord and of biblical teachings. It

is rather the person of Jesus Christ that confronts an individual or a community and makes claims on that person or community. Faith in Jesus then has great impact upon culture, religious worldview and society.

Jesus the Messiah must not be clothed with one's particular religious or cultural garment to exclude all others, which might in fact disguise Him and make Him be of a particular religion or culture, and as a result not acceptable to others. If Jesus is the Lord and Saviour of the whole world, then He cannot be made to be of a particular religion or culture. Jesus is not only the Lord and Saviour of Christians, but also of Jews, Muslims, Africans, Hindus, Buddhists and indeed of the whole world. Christians have a biblical and historical basis for making this profound statement to the whole world.

A principal obstacle to Christian proclamation of Jesus to the whole world has been due to its elaborate religious and cultural paraphernalia which keeps off others or which disfigures Jesus before others, and as a result makes Him unwanted. This is what Christianity must deal with in the face of criticism and rejection from the world of religions and cultures. Jesus is the Lord and Saviour of all world religions and cultures and no religion or culture should keep one from embracing Him. Theologising takes effect at the moment of belief in Jesus Christ. And this theologising takes place within the context of religions and cultures. The new faith in Jesus, the Word of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit all provide help in the process of theologising and living out the new Christian faith. Anyone who has read in depth the two books of Kato mentioned above would immediately recognise that Kato's theology of culture and religions has a primary goal of leading people to saving faith in Jesus Christ. This objective was never made secondary by Kato, but primary.

The other obstacle for Christian proclamation of Jesus the Messiah is the lack of commitment to the cardinal teachings of the Bible, the apostles and the historical testimony of the church on the uniqueness of Jesus. Liberal theological studies of African traditional religions, Western secular and pluralist theologies, and the call of the non-Christian religions that Christianity should drop

its claims of the unique Christ for salvation, have all combined to divert the attention of Christianity from its primary task of proclaiming Jesus Christ to the whole world. Dr Ken Gnanakan of India echoes the charges of Kato, but in a different way. He states,

The shift of emphasis from absolutes to relatives, from 'classicist' to historical consciousness and the resulting openness to other beliefs has brought radical changes in the attitudes of many to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in relation to other religions. The shift from exclusivism gradually on to inclusivism and now to pluralism is a shift from a commitment to the particular revelation in Jesus Christ to the universal revelation of God everywhere. And with this transfer of confidence, Christians have had to grapple afresh with some dominant theological themes that hitherto had been taken for granted (Gnanakan 1992:150).

Historically, the presentation of Jesus Christ has been rejected because of fear of conversion and apostasy. Another religion has arisen and for this reason threatens all others. The instinct for religious and cultural survival brings about competition, rivalry, opposition and fears. Religious pride and status also engender opposition to change. Furthermore, the fear of the consequences resulting from religious and cultural change generate opposition.

In the contemporary setting, this subject raises additional concerns with conversion and imperialism. The loss of religious and cultural freedom resulting from imperialism and colonialism has been the main reason for opposition, especially in Africa. The fear of domination and imposition of religions and cultures upon others have greatly influenced modern thinking and Christian missions. After the age of imperialism and colonialism, we are now in the age of independence and equality of all peoples, cultures and religions and "globalisation". Conversion to other religions or cultures is like reverting back into colonialism. The modern gospel which is being preached is the equality of all peoples, religions and cultures. The modern world is thought to have come of age, and has therefore assumed its status as a "pluralist world". The world is becoming "democratised" and the gospel of religious pluralism is the "in-thing". Western religious pluralism is not just philosophy or theology but also essentially ideological. This is a "Western

agenda" driven primarily by a concern to correct the Western triumphalistic attitude to mission, and the solution offered by Western pluralists is itself "a product of modern, Western rationalisation". "Pluralists are modernists who think that autonomy is the highest good" (Gnanakan 1992:119,120). It is precisely this issue that led Kato to declare that "Christianity is not the White man's religion" (Kato, African Cultural Revolution).

Secularism and modernity have dealt a death blow to "god-talk" and religion. The scientific worldview has replaced the religious worldview. Religious language has lost its salt and has become meaningless in a scientific and secular world. Thus this subject is, to my understanding, a major critical theological issue that should receive much attention in our day, especially in Africa. African scholars have spent too much time and resources in the areas of cultural and religious studies and too little in biblical theology, Christian doctrines and church history. Good theological and historical studies as they relate to the essentials of biblical Christianity are lacking. Much attention has been given to the comparative studies of religions and cultures and very little to the development and formulation of biblical theology of African religions and cultures. The result is that the theological findings and interpretations lack adequate biblical rootage and Christian critical evaluation.

These were the challenges that Kato took up very seriously and especially the theological challenge of the uniqueness of Jesus for salvation in Africa and the need for developing a biblical theology of African traditional religions and cultures. He emphasised more than anything else the centrality of the Bible as an indispensable tool for doing theology in Africa. His major concern was to protect the absoluteness of the revelation of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible from the ravages of universalism and liberal theology.

Kato's Theological Corpus

Kato devoted his short life to addressing these theological issues in Africa until his death in December 1975, and in particular the major theological issue of *incipient universalism*. There is a need today to elaborate this very important theological issue. The

common theological premise of this perspective is universal grace without Jesus, that salvation can be obtained outside of Christ and the church. Kato challenged such views in his doctoral dissertation in 1973, which was published in 1975 by Evangel Publishing House in Kenya as *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*.

It is important that I attempt to summarise the writings and addresses of Kato as represented by his bibliography. His *Theological Corpus* was characterised by the following themes and concerns:

1. Kato proclaimed the unique Christ for salvation of the whole world, against: a) the liberal Western theologians who promote the idea of universalism of salvation without Christ; and b) the liberal African theologians who domesticate Jesus Christ into an African worldview (religions and cultures), and also advocate that salvation comparable to that in Christianity can be found in the African traditional religions.
2. Kato advocated a biblical theology and worldview as the prolegomena to the study of religions and cultures.
3. Kato rejected the cultural imperialism and missionary paternalism of Western Christianity in Africa.
4. Kato promoted the study of African culture, religions and philosophy as prerequisites for: a) the formulation of a biblically-based theology and worldview from African perspectives as a means of addressing and evaluating African religions and cultures; and b) the development of a sound, evangelical theological education for training African theologians, pastors and church leaders.
5. Kato also articulated concern about:
 - a. African cultural and religious revivals that seem to negate the Gospel of Christ;
 - b. African nationalist protest against Christianity as the "white man's religion";
 - c. the lack of sound biblical and theological understanding in general among the majority of African Christians;

- d. the influence of African religions and cultures over African Christianity, which has resulted in syncretism and spiritism.

Kato's theological agenda can be summarised in his own *Ten Point Proposal*:

1. Adhere to the basic presuppositions of historic Christianity.
2. Express Christianity in a truly African context, allowing it to judge African culture and never allowing the culture to take precedence over Christianity.
3. Concentrate effort in training men in the Scriptures, employing the original languages to facilitate their ability in exegeting the Word of God. In-depth knowledge rather than mere superficial mechanics in the ministry should be the primary concern.
4. Carefully study African traditional religions as well as other religions, but only secondarily to the inductive study of God's Word. The New Testament writers and the early church evangelists did not consider it worthwhile to spend too much of their energy in the study of non-Christian religions. All non-Christians belong to one and the same group—unsaved. The sinful nature needs no study analysis as its outworking is clearly manifested in daily life.
5. Launch an aggressive programme of evangelism and missions to prevent a fall into the error of the doctrinal strife of third-century Christianity in North Africa (at the expense of evangelism).
6. Consolidate organisational structures based on doctrinal agreements. Fraternal relationship such as is being shaped by the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), is strongly urged. The gregarious nature of the African calls for a fellowship so much needed; yet it does not need to be an organic union, neither does it need to be a unity at any cost.
7. Carefully and accurately delineate and concisely express terms of theology as a necessary safeguard against syncretism and universalism.
8. Carefully present apologetics towards unbiblical systems that are creeping into the church. This calls for more leadership training.
9. Show concern in social action, but bear in mind at all times that the primary goal of the church is the presentation of personal salvation. As individuals are converted, they become instruments of revolutionising the society for good. The church is not a department of

social welfare for the government. It is a body of individuals called out to prepare the world for the second coming of Christ.

10. Following the steps of the New Testament Church, Christians in Africa should be prepared to say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Africa needs her Polycarps, Athanasiuses, and Martin Luthers, ready to contend for the faith at any cost. The Lord of the church who has commanded Bible-believing Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), has also said, "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20). May we give the reverberating response, "Amen, Come Lord Jesus" (Kato, *Theological Pitfall*, p. 181-184).

Kato approached his subject in contention with two fronts, namely, (1) Western liberal theologians and (2) African liberal theologians, whose theological methodologies, interpretations and conclusions could lead to the rejection of the uniqueness of Jesus. The fallacy of some African theologians which Kato challenged was their assertion that salvation is not the exclusive reserve for Christianity, but that there is the possibility of finding salvation outside of Jesus Christ. Thus is affirmed the universality of salvation and the possibility of finding salvation in the African traditional religions. The theology of African "intermediaries" asserts that God had mediators between Himself and the Africans, thus affirming the plurality of salvation. The unique Christ for salvation makes no sense here. It is this very theological implication for biblical interpretations in Africa that Kato sought to address. The views of Kato on this subject were firm, assertive, direct, and biblically authoritative. He saw himself leading a crusade against what most African theologians had accepted to promote on the continent of Africa. He saw the dangers of heresy, syncretism, spiritism and weak biblical theology on the continent of Africa.

Looking back at the African theological scene of the past 25 years, Kato was right. Our study and veneration of African traditional religions has succeeded somewhat in making Christianity a mission field for the evangelistic campaigns of the non-Christian religions. In Africa today we have a theology of

African traditional religions, but without a biblical orthodoxy. Kato was concerned about the unorthodox theology in African Theology.

The fallacy of some Western theologians is their assertion of the universality of God's grace, which means that salvation can be found outside of Jesus Christ. It can be found "cosmically" (universally) through the "Cosmic Christ", not necessarily the historical Christ. The two fallacies originated from the conception of the "universality of grace" which Kato termed "incipient universalism". This theological view was relatively new on the continent of Africa, hence his use of the term "incipient".

This "universal grace", according to Western emphasis, is located not in "religions" per se, but it is cosmic, embracing the entire humanity. Jesus Christ in this conception is not necessarily the cause of this "universal grace", but God alone, the Creator. This universal grace is within the reach of individuals without Jesus Christ. Its basis is God, who is the Father of all humanity. God alone can mediate this universal grace, through His universal Spirit or through His "Cosmic Christ", who is not necessarily the historical Christ. Kato believed that this belief in "universal grace" did not originate from Africa but from the West, and it was just beginning to take root in Africa through some African scholars of the African traditional religions.

In the case of African scholars, the emphasis on "universal grace" is focused on its location within the African traditional religions, not necessarily in individuals, as is the case with Western universalism, which stresses not religions or cultures but the entire humanity. This "universal grace" in African emphasis is not only found in Jewish religion, but in others as well, particularly the African traditional religions. Jesus Christ in this conception is not necessarily the cause of this "universal grace" but God alone, who is the Father of not only humanity in general (individuals) but also of the religions and cultures of the world. On this issue, Ken Gnanakan asked: "But the question is to do with the availability of salvation directly through this grace and without the explicit work of Jesus Christ" (Gnanakan, 1992:210). He then answered his question as follows.

This grace is not available in religions because of their status as religions, but because of people to whom God wants to make his grace available. Wherever people are present God's grace must also be present, particularly if grace is of God demonstrated despite sin. But this grace is not operative through religion, but wholly through Jesus Christ, towards whom God's grace must point" (Gnanakan, 1992:210).

The question of Jesus the Messiah being the only mediator of this "universal grace" is at the heart of Kato's theological discourse.

Going beyond the debate of the possibility of salvation outside Jesus Christ is the current emphasis on "Gospel and Culture". The focus is on the study of religion or culture and how the Gospel relates to both religion and culture. A host of questions have been raised in this area, such as questions of relevance, translation, inculturation, contextualisation, indigenisation, Africanisation and Christianisation. This area does not deal with the questions of "salvation" per se, but the translatability of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel has to be made intelligible both by expression and communication in a given cultural context. Critics of Kato fault him in this area, that his attitude, style and application of the Gospel of Christ to the African traditional religions and cultures was "Biblicist", that he advocated discontinuity between Christianity and the African traditional religions and cultures, and that his framework did not allow for "culturally rooted questions" (Bediako 1992:386-425).

For Kato, the primary tool for doing theology is the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible addresses and challenges the African traditional religions and cultures with its claims. However, Kato did propose a methodology of relating the Gospel of Christ to African religions and cultures as stated above. One can only fault his methodology if one is prepared to fault it for being "Biblical Theology", and for deriving from a "tradition" which was not of the popular "liberal tradition" but was rather the "evangelical tradition". He dared to provide an alternative method of doing theology in Africa (Biblical Theology), quite contrary to the Idowus and the Mbitis; and he also dared to challenge the "liberal tendencies" of African Theology. It is to be regretted that the young Kato did not live long enough to take up the secondary theological task which he proposed, and

which since his death become dominant in African theological discourse and research, namely the question of the "Gospel and Culture", which Kwame Bediako and others have now taken up and so much developed.

There is a new but subtle challenge to Christianity as posed by the non-Christian religions and cultures. This new challenge can be understood if we understand the state of post-missionary Christianity in Africa. We wish to state emphatically that the challenge of the non-Christian religions and cultures to Christianity in Africa is real and powerful. We have become accustomed to the belief that Christian missions in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries brought the Gospel of Christ to Africa, thus making Africa a mission field. The products of missionary Christianity still believe that their major task today is the same as that of the missionaries, taking the Gospel of Christ to the non-Christian religions and cultures. This is true to some extent, but the mission field has changed. Those in the mission field who have accepted the Gospel of Christ have in turn become a vast mission field to the evangelising forces of the non-Christian religions and cultures. Just a few decades ago, Christianity targeted the non-Christian religions and cultures as their mission field. But the reverse is the case today. Christians and Christianity today have become a fertile mission field to the evangelistic activities of the non-Christian religions and cultures. The powerful gospel of the non-Christian religions is something which Christianity must have to contend with today. The non-Christian cultures, worldviews and ideas have assumed very powerful and influential positions within our modern society. Kato left us as a prophet some 25 years ago and he foresaw these and gave us warning.

Is Christianity aware of this change of religious roles? Is Christianity still thinking of reaching the "heathens", "pagans", "unreached", "unbelievers"? Is Christianity still thinking of crossing the seas to reach the heathen lands? The present reality is that the gospel of the non-Christian religions and cultures has invaded the domain of Christianity. The Christian territory has become polluted and saturated with the gospel of the non-Christian religions and cultures. Christianity today is at the receiving end.

Christianity is being vigorously evangelised by the non-Christian religions and cultures.

The gospels of modernity, universalism, pluralism, secularism, humanism and African spiritualism and tradition, Islam and other non-Christian religions have finally succeeded in turning the tables and taking a stand to evangelise Christianity. The challenge of the non-Christian religions today is felt in its rejection of the unique Christ for salvation and in its evangelistic fervour to weaken and silence the Christian Gospel.

Christianity steeped in its tradition sends out people as missionaries to reach the unreached, but non-Christian religions send out ideas, cultures, worldviews and social, political and economic institutions to reach, convert and entangle Christians. The non-Christian religions beam their gospel through satellites, radio, television, internet, political, economic and social theories, and models of modernisation and development. Modernity as a non-Christian religion and culture is real and has affected the Christian presentation of the Gospel of Christ.

The world of multi-religions, multi-cultures, multi-values and multi-truth-claims has all along throughout history questioned, challenged and even objected to the exclusiveness of the Christian presentation of the unique Christ. As already pointed out, what has been viewed as objectionable and questionable is the Christian confession of the uniqueness of Christ for salvation. Furthermore, the Christian faith in its commitment to evangelise the whole world for Christ has always been viewed with great suspicion. Christianity has been accused of being arrogant, intolerant, insensitive and without having a spirit of "live and let live", accommodation or compromise. On account of this, the non-Christian religions and cultures have always put forth many reasons and obstacles as to why they cannot accept the Christian presentation of the unique Christ and the Christian absolute truth claims of Jesus the Messiah as the only Lord and Saviour of the whole world.

Furthermore, the study of world religions and cultures by secular social scientists in our day has approached Christianity as one among many world religions and cultures. To them Christianity and biblical truths can be subjected to the test of rational and

logical philosophy and empirical sciences. The chief end is to define and reinterpret Christianity and all its truth claims—and its Lord and Saviour—within the context of plural religions, cultures and social values. Within this world context of universalism, pluralism, secularism, relativism, scienticism, humanism and spiritism, Christianity and its Lord and Saviour can neither be unique nor absolute in their truth claims. Furthermore, they assume that there can be no exclusive presentation of the unique Christ to the world of religions and cultures. In its place the secular social scientists and non-Christian religions believe in the presentation of a new gospel of mutuality, respect, acceptance, accommodation and equality of all religions and cultures. It is just this non-Christian "gospel" which is so adversely affecting our presentation and proclamation that Kato in his *Theological Corpus* sought to address.

BYANG KATO AS A LEADER AND A CHRISTIAN

No one doubts the fact that Byang Kato was indeed a great theologian. It is equally true that he was a great Christian and a great Christian leader. He was a man of vision, of mission and of dreams. No one questioned his ability to lead, as he was divinely favoured to assume leadership anywhere within Christian circles. He was born a leader and a prophet, and throughout his short life he demonstrated such qualities. Also the impact of Kato's personal life upon individuals still remains his most enduring legacy. This aspect, which can only be mentioned here, deserves to be given attention and highlighted in another forum.

Kato's Leadership in AEAM and WEF

Space does not permit me to consider in any detail Kato's role as a Christian leader in the Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA—formerly AEAM) and the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). Kato spent less than three years as the General Secretary of AEAM, but his impact on the Evangelicals and the Christian ecumenics in Africa has been phenomenal and enduring. His primary focus was theological education and training at a higher

level. He proposed the founding of the Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST) for francophone Africa, and the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (NEGST) for anglophone Africa. He also believed in strengthening the church through Christian education and production of church materials. He was a strong believer in the unity of Evangelicals in Africa. Kato was a vocal Christian apologist, the defender of the Christian faith in Africa in many venues. His writings and conference speeches reflected his passion for Christian orthodoxy. I would have loved to say more in this area, especially about his international role as a world Christian leader. At the time of his death he was the vice-president of the World Evangelical Fellowship, and chair of its Theological Commission. Kato's impact upon the lives of Christians worldwide has remained an enduring legacy.

Kato's Leadership in ECWA

Kato was the General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) from 1967 to 1970. For the three years he spent in office, he brought vision, a sense of mission, and administrative and leadership skills to ECWA. His priority was theological, pastoral and leadership training of the nationals. He came at the time when SIM was gradually handing-over the mission responsibility to the nationals. His greatest burden was how to train and groom the nationals to take-over from the missionaries. What consumed his heart was the lack of adequately trained theologians and pastors for ECWA. His singular message to young and potential ECWA people was the necessity of higher theological and secular training. He was very forceful and persuasive in asking young people to aspire for higher education. In this particular area he did not get along well with some SIM missionaries and some ECWA leaders who were suspicious of higher education.

In spite of the difficulties in persuading SIM and ECWA of the need for higher education and quality leadership training, he was never daunted. Within SIM and ECWA, Kato was often revered, but feared by some and envied by some as well. His personality, vision and mission set him apart from his peers. He could see beyond his contemporaries, and indeed seemed as a man who came

before his time. Some misunderstood him on account of this. Here was a man who loved his Mission, his Church and his people, and sought to do everything to help them develop and succeed, but had to suffer the frustration of being misunderstood by some.

Kato's legacy as a leader in ECWA is always remembered as one who believed in training and grooming the next generation of leaders. He groomed many younger leaders for the Church. He had a habit of hand-picking younger people for leadership training and encouraged any to higher education. Kato was always interested in people, especially their well-being and progress in life. Many in ECWA can testify to the fact that Kato had personally encouraged them in one way or another.

The legacy of Kato gives a general sad note to the fact that when God raises a visionary leader for a people, at times such persons do not live long and at times the very ones who are to benefit are the first to forget the prophetic vision in preference for the status quo.

Kato as a Christian

One outstanding aspect of the enduring legacy of Kato's life is the fact that no one ever met Kato without being impacted by his life or at least forming a clear impression about him. Certainly above all Kato was a dedicated Christian. His faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was non-negotiable. He was never shaken nor did he fear any opposition to his faith. He was never ashamed of his Lord anywhere and he shared his faith everywhere. His faith was very transparent in that one could not meet him without knowing about his faith. Kato was an evangelist and he believed strongly in personal evangelism. Kato was also devout. He had a very high view of Scriptures and he studied the Bible regularly. For him the Bible was authoritative over the whole of life and everything in life was captive to the Word of God. His primary tool for doing theology was the Bible; he never made the Bible secondary in his theological tools. May God grant us the wisdom, grace and enablement to profit from his example.

CONCLUSION

I may perhaps best conclude by posing the question: what lessons can we learn from Kato's legacy? If we are right in capturing the theological heartbeat of Kato, permit me to suggest the following guidelines, arising from Kato's theological legacy, for the ongoing presentation and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

1. Be committed to the presentation of the unique Christ to the non-Christian religions and cultures.
2. Reaffirm the historic, apostolic proclamation of the Lordship, authority, power and supremacy of Jesus Christ over the whole world.
3. Uphold a biblical and theological basis for the uniqueness of Christ, and for the biblical concept of salvation.
4. Work out the theological and ethical implications of the Christian confession of the universal Lordship, authority, power and supremacy of Christ in the world.
5. Develop a method and a strategy for relating the Gospel of Salvation in Christ to the non-Christian religions and cultures.
6. Define clearly the status of the unique Christ and His Gospel of Salvation within the context of world religions and cultures.
7. Encourage a strong missionary commitment to the proclamation of the unique Christ to the whole world as its Lord, Saviour and Mediator.
8. Establish a biblical theology of world religions and cultures, and ascertain the degree of continuity or discontinuity of such with the cardinal claims of the unique Christ over these non-Christian religions and cultures.
9. Defend and promote Christian biblical orthodoxy against internal heresies and non-Christian doctrines and truth claims.

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THE STORY OF THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES And Its Implications for Theology

James O Kombo

Historically, the African Independent Churches have been on the margins of Christianity in Africa. They arose outside the Christian missions and were not included in the Christian Councils. They were neither accepted by the ecumenical churchmen nor the evangelicals.

Dr. James Kombo in his article describes how many of these AIC churches are moving from the margins to the centre and are gaining greater recognition. He also discusses the implications of this for the theology of the African Independent Churches.

INTRODUCTION

The African Independent Churches (AICs) as a distinct expression of Christian faith in the context of Africa need no introduction. The current wave of the AICs has been around since 1819. What is surprising, however, is that by the close of the 1950s (about 140 years since the appearance of the first AIC), these churches still had no place within the history of African Christianity. It is partly as a result of the International Missionary Council study, published as *African Independent Church Movements* (1963), and the aid of HW Turner's two volumes (*History of an Independent Church* and *Independent Church*)

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Movements), both published in 1967, that the Christian fraternity for the first time granted these movements Christian identity and referred to them as 'independent churches'.¹ And so, whereas the 1960s marked a notable change of attitude towards AICs, the 1970s and the 1980s afforded the AICs favorable conditions for growth. In the context of South Africa, for example, the black Christian population in mainline churches was 52% while that of the AICs stood at 27%. By 1991, statistics had changed drastically and were 41% and 36% respectively.² These statistics are representative of the development in the largely Christian nations of Africa. According to DB Barrett and J Padwick, by 1993 the membership of the AICs amounted to 45 million (14% of the African Christian population).³ These statistics indicate that if present trends continue, by the end of this decade most African Christians will be adherents of AICs.

Whereas the terms 'independent' or 'indigenous' on the one hand and 'historical' or 'older' churches on the other hand have been used to distinguish the AICs from the churches that maintained their mission connection, it is becoming increasingly

¹ Before these developments Bishop Bengt Sundkler had written *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948 and revised in 1961) in which he distinguished the "Ethiopian" movement from the "Zionist" movement. In a sense, this work is seminal to the International Missionary Council's study and the two volumes by HW Turner. Sundkler is the first to take a relatively soft stand towards AICs. The others preferred to see the AICs as "messianic", "separatist", "millennial", "syncretistic" and so on (see Efraim Andersson's *Messianic Movements on the Lower Congo*; CG Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, London: SCM Press, 1962; DB Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968)

² G.C. Oosthuizen. "Indigenous Christianity and the Future of the Church in South Africa" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1997:8

³ See D.B. Barrett and T.J. Padwick. *Rise Up and Walk*. Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1989:9.

clear that these terms are experiencing strain. As AF Walls has observed, most African historical churches "... are independent in the sense that their leadership is African, their ministry overwhelmingly African, and missionary direction minimal". Further, they can also be regarded as 'independent' in the sense that, along with the independents, they are taking seriously the question raised by the African identity that concerns the continuity of the African Christian present with the traditional African past. Whereas there has been remarkable 'AIC-isation' of the historical churches, there has also been a clear 'historicisation' of the AICs. In the words of AF Walls, "... the constituency of the independents is changing; some are institutionalising, and developing along the well known lines of the older churches". This give and take phenomenon, as Walls has predicted, means that,

... the history of the African Christianity will be a single story, in which the missionary period is only an episode. The judgement of the churches of Africa will not be whether one can denominate them "older" or "independent" – that distinction, I believe, will in time, and perhaps soon, become meaningless. Their judgement, like that of all the churches, will be by the Lord of the Church on the basis of his Word.⁴

The African Christianity has unconsciously gone through a process of reassessment as well as realignment and it is beginning to experience some aspects of Walls' prediction. At practical levels, the AICs and the historical churches today participate as equal partners in ecumenical conferences and services. They train their ministers in the same Bible schools and seminaries. Indeed, as David Bosch, has observed, the AICs are at the centre alongside such major Christian traditions as "... the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the Pentecostal Churches".⁵ TS Maluleke believes that the

⁴ A.F. Walls. "The Anabaptists of Africa? The Challenge of the African Independent Churches" in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, April, 1979:49, 50.

⁵ D. Bosch in M.L. Daneel. *Quest for Belonging*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987:9.

theology of the AICs, though “enacted”, “oral”, or “narrative”, is now regarded to be as valid as the written African theologies.⁶ Psychologically, the AICs are now comfortable with the historical churches, and the historical churches are clearly in the process of going through a change of attitude. The best illustration of this observation is the 1997 consecrations of the archbishops of two different Kenyan AICs. In these two consecrations, there was unprecedented, active participation by bishops and ministers of the historical churches.

This tumbling of the wall between the AICs and the historical churches and the consequent ‘historicisation’ of the AICs and the ‘AIC-isation’ of the historical churches will, in my opinion, be one of the challenges for the African church for decades to come. For the first time the historical churches will be forced to acknowledge that they are not necessarily ‘more’ church and the independents will also be compelled to re-evaluate their understanding of the role of indigenous culture in Christian faith. Yet ‘historicisation’ of the AICs must not be seen as a strategy of mere ‘Westernization’ of an already indigenised African Christianity, neither may ‘AIC-isation’ of the historical churches be viewed as simple identification with the AICs. The process of ‘historicisation’ taking place within the AICs means that the independents are genuinely seeking to improve their structures as well as their processes, and that they are also actively aligning themselves with the tradition of the Christian faith. The process of ‘AIC-isation’ in the historical churches, on the other hand, means that these churches have recognised the theological strategy in indigenous Christianity and are genuinely prepared to use the intellectual tools of the African culture to articulate the elements of the Christian faith. What will this mean to African Christianity?

UNITY OF THE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH: ONE STORY, ONE CONTRIBUTION

⁶ T.S. Maluleke. “Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the twenty-first Century”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (November 1997:17).

For some reason, it is still difficult for the African Christianity to come to grips with the reality of the above mentioned processes in its midst. There is a need for the Christian church in Africa to acknowledge, at least at a formal level, that these processes are taking place in its midst and that the African church is one church, regardless of the different ecclesiastical traditions. The fact that all the African churches will, at the end of the day, have a single history, also means that the global Christian fraternity will increasingly see the African church as one, as well as that it will expect from the African church a united and a significant contribution.

There are many contributions that a united African Christianity can make to the global church. An example of where a united African Christianity can contribute is in enabling Western theologies, for instance, to re-evaluate their understanding of God. The Western theologies have problems with what to make of God. According to Professor GM Setiloane, "... the whole discussion in the West – focussed in 'Honest to God' and the 'Death of God' theology – suggests that the West itself has lost the image of God as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, and deals, at the best, with a 'creator absconditus', a god of the gaps, or a saviour of individual souls destined for a pie in the sky".⁷ The situation is different in the African scene. The African people, as Placide Tempels once said, live more by 'Being' than by following their own ideas. This 'Being', Tempels further explains, is, in the conception of the traditional African peoples, the "great, powerful, Life Force".⁸ The 'Being' is none other than God, the first cause of all things. Professor Bolaji Idowu argues that as far as the African people are concerned, if God does not exist, then the reality outside man also does not exist.⁹

⁷ G.M. Setiloane. *The Image of God Among the Sotho-Tswana*. Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1976, p. 229.

⁸ P. Tempels. *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris, 1959, pp. 23, 28.

⁹ B. Idowu. *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London, SCM Press, 1973, p. 104.

The AICs and the African historical churches are starting from an advantage in this regard. They do not have to prove the existence of God and, therefore, they do not have the problem of how to talk about God. With the shift of the centre of gravity of the Christian faith from Europe and North America to Africa,¹⁰ it might not be far fetched or even presumptuous to say that in the decades to come, the African church, including the AICs, will re-educate the global Christianity not only on the God language, but also on such concepts as spirituality, sin, salvation, personhood, and so on.

But the African church that will make a united contribution to the global Christianity is also a church that will learn to work together in addressing African problems. John Stott, speaking in the context of his own change of mind on the issue of evangelism and social responsibility, said that he was now in a position to "... see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus".¹¹ A similar position is noted in the 1982 Mission and Evangelism document of the WCC. Among other things, this document states that,

There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom... There is here a double credibility test: A proclamation that does not hold forth the promises of the justice of the kingdom to the poor of the earth is a caricature of the Gospel; but Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promises of the kingdom also makes a caricature of a Christian understanding of justice.¹²

¹⁰ See A.F. Walls. "Towards Understanding Africa's Place in Christian History" in *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, Leiden, 1976, p. 180.

¹¹ J.R. W. Stott. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. London: Falcon, 1975, p. 23.

¹² World Council of Churches. Mission and Evangelism document, 1982, para 34. Cited in D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 408.

It is interesting to note that the African churches of colonial times were very close to JRW Stott and the WCC Mission and Evangelism document quoted above. These older churches, and there were several AICs amongst them, did not distinguish between evangelism and social responsibility as two separate mandates. In the Kenyan context, the older AICs and the historical churches preached the Gospel, but they also established schools, health institutions and agricultural projects for their followers and the surrounding communities. Today, the situation seems to have changed, at least in the context of Kenya. Churches seem to be shy about questions of construction, preferring to limit their programs to the implication of evangelism on the religious and the cultural. This change is outspoken.

Apart from the grace of God, the African Christianity does not have the promise that spiritual forces, ignorance, fear, evil, death and everything that is mean will be eliminated from the African scene in the decades to come. There is thus no easy answer to the questions plaguing Africa. Even in the decades to come, the God we have come to know in the Lord Jesus Christ will still surround the African people on every side. He will not leave us alone. The African people, however, will still have to face the reality of spiritual forces, diseases, ignorance, evil and fear. The task of the African church will be to guide the African audiences to acknowledge and to actively participate in what it means to be followers of Christ in the midst of the forces and vices of Africa. The African church, through obedience to the demands of the Gospel, will witness to Africa and the world that it has indeed won for herself the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Spiritual forces, ignorance, disease, and all manners of evil will be there, but the African church will proclaim the message that the followers of Christ ought to live in a state of shalom, that is well being.¹³

¹³ For a detailed treatment of 'well being' and how it is to be applied to the African situation, see DT Adamo, "Peace in the Old Testament and in the African Heritage" in *The Bible in African Christianity, Essays in Biblical Theology*, eds. HW Kinoti and JM Waliggo. Nairobi: Acton

Whereas the African church will seek to give glory to God by preaching shalom, and as God works in our inner beings living in a state of shalom, both the AICs and the historical churches will together have to address the triumphalistic Christianity that is becoming increasingly fashionable in Africa. One would affirm the kind of shalom and the consequent victory suggested by triumphalistic Christianity if a one-sided transcendental view of God was normative. The Christian faith, however, understands God and his ways differently. The God of the Christian faith brings shalom and happiness, victory and defeat, power and powerlessness together in a profound way.¹⁴ According to Hendrikus Berkhof, God who is present as almighty is also experienced as,

... the one who is hidden or angry or provoked or unrecognized. ... That is how we see him present in Israel. ... God's history with Israel is to a large degree the history of a God who sees his plans fail and who repeatedly must react to hostile or at least disobedient initiative of his partner, without apparently having (or wanting to have) the power to force that partner to his will.¹⁵

The New Testament also depicts God as a man who has gone on a journey and is therefore absent (see Matt 24:50; 25:14; and Mk 12:1). The Son refuses to establish the Kingdom by force (Mat 26:51f.; Lk 22:38; Jn 6:15; 18:36) and instead renounces power and becomes powerless in order to bring succour to humankind and the entire creation (Phil 2:6-8). On the cross, we see the climax of the divine defenselessness. Here God is unable to save himself, the Father is depicted as being in complete silence and man, by nailing Christ to the cross, triumphs over God (Mk 15:31f., 34). Yet in the powerlessness of God there is power par excellence (I Cor 1:25). Here, then, is an important paradigm shift that the African church

Publishers, 1997 (99-111) and HW Kinoti. "Well Being in African Society and the Bible" in Kinoti and Waliggo (112-122).

¹⁴ See H. Berkhof. *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. , pp. 133-140.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

will have to look into seriously as she brings the message of shalom and victory to the African audiences. In the midst of the spiritual forces and vices of our own time, the African people need to rest assured that God, who surrounds them on all sides and who is the ground of their shalom and victory, is powerful. God is powerful, but in a different way, in a hidden yet active sense.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE READJUSTMENTS FOR AICs

The AICs Will Need to Uphold

The Uniqueness and the Catholicity of the Christian Faith

With regard to what to make of God, the incarnation is the point of departure of the Christian faith. The Scriptures and the subjective faith of the Christian present us with a situation that logically leads us to affirm that God became incarnate, suffered on the cross, and redeemed mankind by dying and rising again. In the history of the church, the church fathers were faced with a situation that required them to choose to retain or dispose of the incarnation. On the strength of the scriptural testimony and guided by Scriptural testimony, the Church fathers chose the incarnation, even though it was offensive to the Talmudic faith.¹⁶ Consequently in the

¹⁶ Distinction must be made between the Talmudic faith and the faith of the Old Testament. H Berkhof has explained this difference as follows: Judaism "... began with the group who returned from Babylonian captivity in the 5th and 4th centuries before Christ, but did not get its specific structure until after the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) in the exegetical methods applied to the OT by the Jewish scribes, an exegesis and application that is embodied in the Talmud, which received its definite shape about AD 500. The Talmud may be regarded as parallel of the NT, since both integrate the OT in a new faith perspective" (H Berkof.

Talmudic polemic, against the Christians, the latter were called 'Babylonians', 'deceivers', and 'a heresy of two powers'.¹⁷

The view that God endured to be born, suffered on the cross, and redeemed mankind by dying and rising again is not available in any other faith. According to Fulton, "... nowhere is the union of God and man so concrete and definite, and so universal in its import as in the Christian religion".¹⁸ In modern times, CS Lewis has made the same point regarding the story of the incarnation. According to him,

(The story) is not transparent to reason: we could not have invented it ourselves. It has not the suspicious *a priori* lucidity of Pantheism or of Newtonian physics. It has the seemingly arbitrary and idiosyncratic character which modern sciences are slowly teaching us to put up with in this universe. ... If any message from the core of reality ever were to reach us, we should expect to find in it just that unexpectedness, that willful, dramatic anfractuosity which we find in the Christian faith. It has the master touch – the rough, male taste of reality, not made by us, or, indeed, for us, but rather hitting us in the face.¹⁹

The message of the incarnation is not just a message for the historical churches. On the contrary, it is the ground of the catholicity of the church. The more than 370 million African Christians²⁰ in the African continent today belong to various

Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith. Grand Rapids, Michigan: WB Eerdmans, 1979, p 22).

¹⁷ See L. Teugels. "The Background of the Anti-Christian Polemics in Aggat Bereshit". *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, XXX, 2, pp. 178-208.

¹⁸ W. Fulton. "Trinity". In *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. ed. J. Hastings. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921, p. 458.

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis. *The Problem of Pain* (font pocket edition). London: Centenary Press, 1940, p. 13.

²⁰ See DB Barrett. "AD 2000: 350 Million Christians in Africa". In *International Review of Mission*, 59 (1970), pp 39 – 54. Barrett revised his figure of 350 million in his World Christian Encyclopedia (WCE), Nairobi, 1982. He further revised his WCE statistics, publishing them first of all in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research (IBMR)*, January 1997 and a further revision in *IBMR*, January, 1998. The figure of 370 million is

Christian traditions. However, one thing is common to them. They have made a decision that their reality, from the time of their conversion, will be articulated in light of the Christ event. On account of this it is important that these Christians have the right understanding, not only of how God, to whom they have said yes, endured to be born, to become man and to suffer, but also of the full implication of that message to their existence. According to Professor JS Mbiti, "... the final test for the validity and usefulness of any theological contribution is Jesus Christ".²¹ Referring to the African context in particular, Professor Mbiti observes that "... if the African theology starts with or even concentrates upon anthropology, it loses its perspective and can no longer be regarded as theology".²²

Professor Mbiti's warning is important to a class of AICs that have not fared well in relation to what to make of Christ. At this stage it is important to note that the AICs fall into different classes namely: Messianic, Ethiopian and Zionist. The Messianic AICs are the ones in trouble with orthodox Christology. They have explicitly accorded the title 'Messiah' to their leaders. As far as the Christian faith is concerned, this is unacceptable. Christ 'from before' is the Christ that the Bible is concerned with (that is Christ 'from behind'). He is God (Christ 'from above'). He became man (Christ 'from below') and completed his ministry according to Scriptures. As far as the Christian faith is concerned, Christ 'from before', Christ 'from behind', Christ 'from above' and Christ 'from below' all constitute Jesus Christ God incarnate. Proper understanding of, and relationship with Christ, is important as it affects all areas of Christian thought.

a calculation by JS Mbiti ("Is the Bible in African Religion and African Religion in the Bible?" Paper delivered at EFSA and University of Stellenbosch, Department of Old and New Testaments International Workshop, 14-15. May 1999, p 1) based on the 1998 and the earlier statistics of Barrett.

²¹ J.S. Mbiti. *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 190.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

It is in view of such a Christocentric approach to the Christian faith and thought that we can emphasise that Christian theologians should not mislead a class of AICs that the icons of some people could represent Christ.²³ Already, sections of African theology believe the concept of the 'African Messiah' is a theological innovation 'more genuine', 'more home grown' and 'more grass-roots based'. The Christian faith has neither the interest nor the theoretical basis for the view that the idea of the 'African Messiah' could represent Christ. In any case, as RJ Schreiter has explained,

... the professional theologian serves as an important resource, helping the community to clarify its own experience and to relate it to the experience of other communities past and present. Thus the professional theologian has an indispensable but limited role. The theologian cannot create a theology in isolation from the community's experience; but the community has need of the theologian's knowledge to ground its own experience within the Christian traditions of faith. In so doing the theologian helps to create the bonds of mutual accountability between local and world church.²⁴

African theologians would have been more helpful to the AICs, and indeed to theology in general, if the former saw their role not as looking for and grounding 'African Messiahs' but, as Kwame Bediako indicates, searching for the equivalents of biblical titles for Jesus in local languages and demonstrating the resonance.²⁵ AF Walls has demonstrated that Christian faith right from the time of the New Testament, to the time of the Church Fathers, Augustine,

²³ See TM Hinga. "An African Confession of Christ: The Christology of Legio Maria Church in Kenya" in *Exploring Afro-Christology*. Ed JS Pobee. Paris: Peter Lang, 1992 (137-144). See also JS Pobee. "Confessing Christ a la African Instituted Churches" in *Exploring Afro-Christology*. Ed JS Pobee. Paris: Peter Lang, 1992 (145-151).

²⁴ R.J. Schreiter. *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985, p. 18.

²⁵ See Kwame Bediako. "The Doctrine of Christ and the Significance of Vernacular Terminology" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, July 1998, p. 110.

Aquinas and John Calvin used the intellectual resources of their contexts to articulate the Christian message.²⁶ Theology would therefore be doing a legitimate service if it sought and turned the mental and moral processes of Africa towards Christ. To engage in such a task is to recognise the special relationship between Christ and God and his unique mission to man and the world. One wonders whether scholarships that ground the idea of the 'African Messiahs' are not simply buttressing the view that the AICs are essentially syncretistic and represent the flip side of genuine Christianity in Africa.

Generally, the Ethiopian and Zionist types of AICs have not had glaring trouble with Christology, although some of them have their respective Ecclesiology built around the person of the leader. The leader, in that case, functions as a traditional African chief. In the traditional Africa, among the roles of a chief were "... judge, commander in chief, legislator, the executive and the administrative head of the community". He also filled "... a sacral role in the sense that he was the link between the living and the spirit world as well as the person who represented the community, their solidarity, their permanence and their continuity".²⁷ Apart from the obvious difficulties this conception raises for Ecclesiology and for the Christian responsibility as salt and light to the surrounding, these AICs are increasingly realising that this notion of leadership is not found anywhere in the Africa of today.

The AICs Will Need to Engage in Formal Theology

The AICs have theologies. These theologies, however, are for the most part "enacted", "oral" or "narrative". Unlike formal theology that is heavily influenced by denominational and theological background, the oral theology spontaneously fills biblical words, expressions and concepts with connotations from the life world of

²⁶ A.F. Walls, "Old Athens and New Jerusalem: Some Signposts for Christian Scholarship in Early History of Mission Studies" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, October, 1997, pp. 146-153.

²⁷ J.S. Pobee, 1992: 149f.

the reader.²⁸ Oral theology is able to do this because it has spared itself the heavy theological baggage arising from two millennia of western theological developments and controversies. Although oral theology has short-circuited the historical development of theology, a number of African theologians are of the opinion that it is no less valid. Laurent Magesa has understood it as a way of doing theology in which focus is not put on interpreting the Bible, but in which the focus is rather on interpreting life with the instrument of the Bible.²⁹ Nevertheless, as we affirm the place of “enacted”, “oral” or “narrative” theology, it is important to note that the days when Africa had no place on the global stage are gone. Moreover, the Africa of today is not an exclusive oral society. Even in Africa, the digital age has come. Simply stated, the AICs exist in real time and space.

But to say that the days when Africa was both aloof and exclusively oral are gone is not to say that we must dispense with oral theology. We must take the strength of oral theology, namely its capacity to relate to the life realities and worldviews of its readers, and incorporate it into formal theology. This will give both the AICs and the entire global theological fraternity a different kind of formal theology. It will be a formal theology that shall have taken the totality of the Christian story as it has come to us and convey it to the life realities and worldviews of the African peoples using the infrastructure of the African intellectual culture and the best of modern scholarship.

A process like this will mean that the AICs cannot leave their theologies engraved only in stories, songs, dances, worship, ceremonies and rites. Our theologies must be deciphered using the best tools of formal theology and put into a language that has taken into consideration the development of the Christian story over two millennia. Unfortunately, this task cannot move fast enough, since

²⁸ See Daniel C. van Zyl, “ATR and the Interpretation of the Bible”. Unpublished paper, 1999.

²⁹ L. Magesa, “From Privatized to Popular Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa”. In *The Bible in African Christianity, Essays in Biblical Theology*. Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1997 (8-24).

the AICs lack personnel with the right capacity for the work. The African scholars who would have helped because they already have the right training and cultural background are clearly depressed by their inability to give direction to theological developments in their own churches.³⁰ Because of this vacuum, the non-African scholars have taken the responsibility of decoding the theologies from the oral matrix and putting them in a formal configuration.³¹

³⁰ Professor JS Mbiti remarked in an address on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on 26 May, 1985, that “Christians in Africa have a faith but not a theology”. Professor George Kinoti, in his book, *Hope for Africa*, described the current situation of the Christian faith in the following words, “there is a sense in which Christianity in Africa is the White man’s religion. The denominations we belong to, the liturgies we use, the hymns we sing, the theologies that govern our beliefs and conduct, be they liberal or evangelical, are all made in the West” (Nairobi: AISRED, 1994, p 74, 75). It is important to note that in these words, Mbiti and Kinoti are clearly making reference to the mainline churches.

³¹ TS Maluleke, “Half a Century of Christian Theologies”, p 18 has made this observation. This observation is easily corroborated by even a casual look at existing significant bibliography on the AICs. The contributors in this category are E Andersson, (*Messianic Popular Movements in the Lower Congo*, 1958), A Anderson, (Moya, 1991), ML Daneel, (*Old and New in Shona independent Churches*, vols. 1, 2, and 3, 1971, 1974 and 1988 respectively; *Quest for Belonging*, 1987; and *Fambidzano – Ecumenical Movement of Zimbabwean Independent churches*, 1989), ML Martin, (*The Biblical Concept of Messianism*, 1964; *Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church*, 1975; and *Prophetic Christianity in the Congo*); GC Oosthuizen, (*The Theology of a South African Messiah*, 1967; *Post-Christianity in Africa*, 1968; and ed. *Religion Alive*, 1986); BGM Sundkler, (*Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 1961; *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, 1976); HW Turner, *African Independent Church*, vols 1 and 2, 1967; *Religious Innovation in Africa*, 1979); FB Welbourn and BA Ogot (*A Place to Feel at Home*, 1966); M West, (*Bishops and Prophets in a Black City*, 1975), WC Willoughby, (*The Soul of the Bantu*, 1928; *Nature Worship and Taboo*, 1932); and RW Wyllie, (*Spirit Seekers: Spiritism in Ghana*, 1980).

The AICs cannot wait for either the non-African researchers or the non-AIC African scholars to formulate and disseminate for them their apprehension of the Christian faith. Neither may they merely withdraw and blame scholars for the bad accounts. One must point out bad scholarship wherever it is found. However, the AICs themselves have to do something about the perception, fixation and circulation of their theologies. The Luo of Kenya have the following instructive idioms: *luth manie lweti ema inego go thuol* (when a snake comes, one confronts it with the club on their person), *giri ema yweyi chilo* (one uses his/her own scrub to clean himself/herself), *chero man e wang' owadu ok moni nindo* (the cataract in your brother's eye does not render you sleepless). Theology, according to St Anselm, is *fides quarens intellectum*. Only the AICs can tell us their apprehension of the faith they have in God who has come to us in Christ.

But what does it take to tell the Christian story to contemporary local and global audiences? There are several issues of relevance here. In the first place, the AICs must be fluent in the universal Christian story. The AICs are a part of the universal church, they do not have another story, neither do they have to 'reinvent the wheel'. It is this same universal story that has been told for the last two thousand years that the AICs must identify, listen to and clarify for the Africa of our time. Then they have to develop the capacity to clarify the problem the story is likely to encounter in the culture of reception. One cannot adequately deal with a problem if they have not learnt how to clarify the problem itself. Once the problem is clarified and the right questions have been asked, one should suggest theological solutions. These solutions must, however, keep in mind the old themes³² introduced by the Christian story. Finally, the solutions must be tested, evaluated and restructured.³³

³² Professor V Brümmer in his paper 'Metaphorical Thinking and Systematic Theology' read in 1998 at the faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch, argues that there are at least two significances of listening to 'old themes' or as he calls it 'consonance with tradition'. First it confines the solution(s) within the boundaries of cumulative tradition thereby allowing the solution(s) to be recognisable for the community of believers,

We do not have to emphasise that one does not gain fluent knowledge of the Christian story by instinct, neither do we need to stress that such skills as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference and explanation cannot be acquired naturally. Having a fluent knowledge of the Christian story and creativity/critical thinking skills call for training and hard work. The AICs must therefore seek training for those entrusted with the doctrine of their respective churches and build their capacities to facilitate their performance.

Missions in the Context of the Self-Reassessment of African Christianity

Reassessment of the stand of the historical churches and the AICs also means that missions have to readjust in the context of Africa. Traditionally, the resources of the universal Church have gone to the African churches that have retained mission roots.

Taking the case of South Africa, for example, this situation means that only 41% of the South African Christian population, which has maintained mission connections, is the beneficiary of all Christian ministries in the world. The independents, which amount to 36% of the total South African Christian population, are not

and in the second place it helps the theologian to learn from the mistakes of the predecessors.

³³ See J Kombo, "The African Renaissance as a new Context for African Evangelical Theology" in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*. Vol 19.1 2000 (3-24). Part of this article dealt with creativity and critical thinking and the cognitive skills that accompany them. I suggested in that article that a critical and a creative theological innovation must apply interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-regulation in at least five steps. The steps are (1) recognising or selecting the problem, (2) clarifying and representing the elements of the problem, (3) proposing solutions to the problem, (4) testing and evaluating or restructuring the solutions, and (5) verification and elaboration. (pp 15-19).

impacted at all. The South African case is a glaring sample of the situation of the relationship between missions and these two traditions of Christianity in the Christian nations of Africa. One can, therefore, conclude from this sample that Christian missions is doing a better job in strengthening the already established Christian traditions in Africa than it is in strengthening the struggling traditions. Missions, in the context of Africa, is, therefore, directed at churches that are comparatively well-established.

The readjustments taking place in both the historical churches and the AICs mean that missions in the context of Africa has to reassess its strategy if it is to maintain its relevance. In order to do this, we suggest this solution: couldn't missions set as a goal the assigning of one theologian couple or pair to every one of the AICs in Africa? According to the statistics of DB Barrett, at a global level, Christians today employ 5,151,000 full-time workers.³⁴ If the AICs numbered 8,000, as DB Barrett and J Padwick indicated in their 1993 statistics,³⁵ we could put the number of AICs today at a conservative 10,000. One theologian couple or pair per AIC means only 20,000 workers out of a total Christian work force of 5,151,000. That is less than 0.38% of the current Christian workforce globally!

The workers could help the AICs in the following areas: 1) In strengthening and implementing their programs (what happens); 2) in clarifying and addressing process concerns (how it happens); 3) in helping the AICs to carefully relate the complex issues of their immediate context to the Gospel; and 4) in linking up the beliefs and practices of the AICs with the historical developments of the larger Christian body. Missions will have failed African Christianity's goal of having a single story if it did not work with the AICs in establishing and strengthening the different aspects of these areas of church life.

³⁴ D.B. Barrett. "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1997" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1997, p. 25.

³⁵ See D.B. Barrett and J. Padwick. *Rise Up and Walk*. Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 9.

CONCLUSION

The African church has focussed on the differences of the Christian traditions in Africa for far too long. In the process, the African church has not had the opportunity to meaningfully interact with other traditions of the Christian faith on the continent, with the society in which it exists and with the global community. As is the case with the rest of the church, the African church too has the promise from Christ that he will build his church and that the gates of hell shall not prevail over it. The African church, regardless of ecclesiastical differences, has been entrusted with the Gospel described by the Apostle Paul as the power of God. The nature of this Gospel requires that we must understand it, articulate it in terms accessible to the conceptual framework of our African audiences, plant it in the cultural milieu of the African peoples and, as an expression of the body of Christ in Africa, give it back to the global church. This is proactive involvement.

Placing the Gospel in terms readily accessible to the African audiences means not only that more and more Africans will say 'yes' to Jesus Christ who is the source of the church and the theme of the Christian message. It also means that we will increasingly seek to contribute more constructively and holistically to the well-being of Africa and the world. In his book, *Hope for Africa*, Professor George Kinoti explores the problem of poverty, injustice, bribery, corruption, unemployment, poor attitude towards work and a depressing political climate. In addition to these, he calls our attention also to the equally disheartening issues such as prostitution, street children, broken homes, wars, genocide, refugees and HIV/AIDS.³⁶ These problems have hit the African at the grass-roots harder. The Christian church, regardless of its ecclesiastical tradition will lose its credibility if the church allowed the ecclesiastical differences to dictate, and in some way, to limit its theological reflection as well as implementation of missions.

³⁶ G. Kinoti. *Hope for Africa*. Nairobi: AISRED, 1994.

Christianity in Nigeria *Part II*

Bulus Y. Galadima
and
Yusufu Turaki

This is the concluding part of the substantial study of Christianity in Nigeria. (See AJET 20.1 for Part I). In Part II Drs. Bulus Galadima and Yusufu Turaki discuss the "Mission Indigenous Policy" and "The Church Within the Nigerian State, 1960 - 1993."

One subscriber of AJET, Dr. Andy Wildsmith, a former missionary in Nigeria who is familiar with church history in Nigeria, observed that two factual errors were made in Part I which we desire to correct. One was a printing error on page 92. The Roman Catholic Mission entered Nigeria in 1861, not 1961. The second error was made in the list attributed to George Foxall. This mistake perpetuates an old error which states that the Qua Iboe Mission entered Nigeria in 1932. Instead, this mission entered Nigeria in 1887 (He refers to several sources, including Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-1891 by J.F.A. Ajayi. Essex, Longman, 1965, p. 234). In 1932 the construction of the first church sanctuary was completed.

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MISSION INDIGENOUS POLICY

This article, Part II of "Christianity in Nigeria," describes the indigenisation policy of some Christian missions which led to the founding of National Churches in the 1950s. This phenomenon was more of the experience of Christian missions in Northern Nigeria, such as, SIM, SUM, UMS, etc. However, mission agencies of the mainline denominations, such as the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans (CMS) and the Catholics did not develop similar mission indigenous policies of the former group. The independent faith missions did two important things: (1) they developed new church structures and organisations; (2) they trained and developed nationals to take-over their mission work. Church missions, on the other hand, did only one major thing and that is, they trained nationals to take the places of missionaries.

This section discusses the indigenous policies of the independent and faith missions which operated mainly in Northern Nigeria.

Classical Indigenous Principles

Some of the classical indigenous principles which Christian missions used were:

Ziegenbalg's and Plutschau's Principles: In the early 1700s, Ziegenbalg and Plutschau, the first non-Catholic missionaries to reach India from Europe, established five basic principles of mission work. (Foxall)

- a. The Church and School are to go together so that Christians can read the Word of God;
- b. The Bible must be available in the vernacular;
- c. In order to communicate the Gospel, the missionary needs to have an understanding of the people;
- d. The objective of preaching is personal conversion;
- e. The indigenous church leadership must come into being.

These five principles can be summarised as: (1) Christian Education, (2) Translation, (3) Language and Cultural Studies, (4) Evangelism and (5) Training indigenous Church leaders.

William Carey's Principles: William Carey developed similar principles after his arrival in India in 1793. Carey's five basic principles of mission work were.

- a. Preach the Gospel as far widespread as possible and by every possible method;
- b. Make the Bible available in the vernacular;
- c. Establish a church as soon as possible;
- d. Study the cultural background of the people; and
- e. Train an indigenous ministry (Foxall).

These five principles can be summarised as (1) itineration, evangelism, and founding of mission stations, (2) translation, (3) church planting, (4) language and cultural studies, and (5) train indigenous church leaders.

David Livingstone's Principles: David Livingstone, who influenced the world and missions in the mid-1800s, developed the principle of the "Bible and the Plow," or "Commerce and Christianity." (Foxall) Livingstone stated, "We ought to encourage the Africans to cultivate for our markets as the most effectual means next to the Gospel for their elevation." Furthermore, he stated, "I go back to Africa to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity." (Foxall)

Later, "education and medicine" were added to the concept of "the Bible and the Plow." "Commerce and Christianity" led to the founding of the John Holt Company and the United Trading Company (UTC) that are well known in Nigeria for their commercial activities with no missionary association today. (Foxall)

Henry Venn's Principles: Henry Venn was the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Nigeria, 1841-71. Henry Venn's principles were stated,

That the objective of mission is the calling into existence of self-overning, self-supporting and self-propagating churches, and that the "euthanasia" of a mission takes place when the missionary is able to resign all pastoral work into the hands of the indigenous ministry and congregation. (Foxall)

Rufus Anderson's Principles: Rufus Anderson of the American Congregational Church developed similar principles as Henry Venn's. He stated that "heathen nations must be rendered independent of Christendom for their religious teachers as soon as possible." (Foxall)

Roland Allan's Principles: Roland Allan's principle, which had greater influence in mission theory beyond Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, was "the dynamic function of the Holy Spirit in the national Church." (Foxall) He stated that,

Paul withheld no gift from them which might enable them to dispense with his presence, he gave as a right to the Spirit-bearing Body the powers which duly belong to a Spirit-bearing Body. (Foxall)

The above classical indigenisation principles had profound influence upon Christian missions. The only difficulty which Christian missions faced was the actual outworking of these principles in practical mission work in Africa. These policies defined in general terms the nature of the Church, its quality, structures, etc. The adequate or inadequate preparations of nationals to take over mission work depended very much upon what Christian missions understood by these indigenous policies and also what models they used in implementing them.

The influence of Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, and Roland Allen upon the Evangelical missions was seen in their emphasis upon building churches that could stand on their own based upon the three selves formula, self-propagation, self-supporting and self-governing.

Implementation of Classical Principles

This section describes how Christian missions attempted to implement the classical indigenisation principles in the Mission Field.

1. Evangelism and Church Planting: Principles of evangelism were taught to early converts who became itinerant evangelists alongside the missionaries. Church planting resulted from various missionary activities, such as, evangelism, itineration, education, medical, literature work, etc. Organised evangelism and church planting based upon classical indigenisation principles were quite evident even during the pioneering stages of the mission work.

2. Theological Training: Christian missions founded many Vernacular Bible Training Schools with the primary purpose of developing indigenous Bible teachers, evangelists, and pastors who would later form a crop of indigenous church leadership.

3. Teacher Training: Teacher Training Centres were also built by Christian missions with the primary purpose of developing indigenous teachers. Similar Advanced Schools were established with the view of preparing indigenous leadership within the African Church.

4. Pastoral Training: Pastoral training was the least developed by Christian missions. Theological institutions were mainly centres of training evangelists and Bible teachers. Pastoral training and church administration were less emphasised. The missionaries felt that these two areas should not be introduced to the Africans too soon. In consequence, this simple preference became doctrinaire over the years. Licensing and ordination of Africans for pastoral duties and church leadership were most difficult to come by. Licensing and ordination of Africans were means of developing African Church leadership as those so licensed and ordained become the first national church leaders.

5. Training of African Evangelists: African evangelists were trained as an auxiliary work force to that of the missionaries in the Mission Field. However, indigenous missionary agencies similar to those of western societies were not formed, except for SIM which developed and indigenous one, African Missionary Society, in the late 1940s.

6. Women's Fellowship: The story of the founding of the Women's Fellowship is another means of implementing indigenisation policy. The Protestant missions in Northern Nigeria saw the value of developing both missionary ladies and national women and advised each mission agency to establish its women ministry.

7. Conference of Missions in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria 1910-1948: The series of Inter-Mission Conferences in the field (1910, 1913, 1926, 1929, 1932, 1935 and 1937) at Lokoja, Miango, and Jos mentioned in the previous section had been of great influence towards the development and implementation of indigenous principles. Similarly the Annual Meeting of the Representatives of Missions (AMRM) from 1935-1948 contributed a lot in this area.

It has been mentioned that the Colonial regulatory policies on Christian missions brought missionaries together in a united front. In addition to these, the conferences provided a common ground forum where Christian missions operating in Northern Nigeria addressed difficult issues which could not be handled by the individual mission

societies, issues such as, marriage, divorce and remarriage, standardisation of Christian worship, Scriptures translation, language studies, grants-in-aid and educational matters, etc. Most of the deliberations during these conferences affected the lives of the indigenous Christians. As such, general policies and resolutions were usually taken which, in consequence, affected the development of national Churches.

The idea of developing a national Church was fully discussed among these missions. At Miango in 1926 the Chairman of the conference introduced a resolution on a "Combined Native Church",

The Chairman felt that each Mission should not perpetuate its own denomination in the Mission Field. The Mission Field should be a place where Missions sink some of their differences and work towards founding of a common Church; some form of Federation. (Conference of Missions Minutes)

The Chairman, Bishop Smith of the CMS, proposed: "United Church of Africa in Northern Provinces." He also suggested the ordination of African ministers.

In these conferences, the missions discussed two types of federations. The first type was the Federation of all Christian Missions and the second, the Union of African Churches, which grew out of these missions. While the Federation of Missions was fully understood, the Union of Churches was not. Some favoured the organic union while others favoured the federation of fellowship of churches. The lack of a consensus on this matter led to the abandonment of the idea of the Union of Churches. The understanding was that each mission should develop its own national churches while continuing the inter-mission conferences. Christian missions cooperated together in various missionary ventures and enterprises, and this fact contributed immensely to the development and implementation of certain indigenous principles.

8. International Missionary Council (IMC): The IMC, based in London, Great Britain, contributed immensely in helping Christian missions to develop indigenous principles. The significance of the International Missionary Conference on Africa at Le Zoute, Belgium in 1926 and the subsequent ones need to be mentioned. The conference

emphasised the importance of understanding and respecting the social values of Africans.

The life of the African is essentially social and based on tribal conditions and traditional customs. The interests of the individual are subordinate to the interests of the group. The community rather than the individual is the unit of thought and practice to a far greater degree than it is among ourselves. (Smith)

One of the greatest issues which faced missionaries was the relation of the Church to African customs and culture. To underscore this point, the conference asserted,

The acceptance by Africans of Christianity does not mean—at least, it ought not to mean—that they cease to be Africans. Dr. Donald Fraser's words—"I fear the evangel which denationalizes"—expressed the general conviction of the Conference. (Smith).

A practical question was asked: "How am I to guide my people so that while becoming true disciples of Christ they may remain true Africans?" On how to deal with the importation of "animistic" beliefs in the Church, the attitude of missionaries should be: "Tolerance combined with thorough and consistent instruction." Dr. Richter called on modern missionaries to break away from their predecessors in the way they treated African customs.

Our missions have had an experience of over a century now, and more or less definite rules have been laid down and followed. On the other hand, I am more and more conscious that those decisions were taken by our predecessors in greater or less ignorance. They did not know what those customs meant; they did not know the Africans. We know the facts far better than they knew them, and cannot but ask ourselves, "Shall we continue to follow their rules?" (Smith)

The Conference took a resolution which was to guard against missionaries wounding the feelings of African Christians: That missionaries should not be overzealous in legislating for the African Church. "After all, Africans know the life of their people as no foreigner can know it; and it is Africans, not foreigners, who will

ultimately determine the course that the African Church will take in these matters." It also warned against the creation of artificial sins. "Europeans are apt to see evil in African doings where there is no evil."

The conference enunciated the principle that "everything that is good in the African's heritage should be conserved, enriched and ennobled by contact with the spirit of Christ." The conference divided customs into three categories:

- a. Customs which are evil – these the Church cannot sanction.
- b. Customs which are not incompatible with the Christian life – these should not be condemned.
- c. Customs whose accidents are evil but whose substance is valuable – these may be purified and used. (Smith)

The categorisation of customs along these lines was a matter to be decided locally.

The Conference raised the question of denominationalism. "Are other missionaries to act similarly, carrying to Africa all the denominational distinctions which are a shame of our European and American Christianity, with the result that the Africans also must learn to pray about "our unhappy divisions"? The lack of missionary understanding of African culture, values, and personality constituted a great obstacle towards missionary development and implementation of indigenous principles.

9. Nationalist Movements: Nationalist movements within the colonies, which became very strong in the mid-1940s, both challenged and rejected colonialism. In their attack on colonialism, Christian missions too, were not spared. The nationalist doctrine emphasised that colonialists should hand-over political power to the indigenes and put an end to all forms of colonialism.

Nationalists were not only interested in wresting power out of the hands of colonialists but also in the training and development of indigenes who would take over power from the colonialists. The demand here was not simply freedom, but consistent training and preparation of those who would run the government machinery when the colonial masters left. As a result of the nationalist movements, their demand for political independence and training of nationals who would take-over became a matter of necessity. This political movement exerted

a powerful influence on missionary development and the implementation of indigenous principles.

Some Africans became quite vocal and radical and thereby demanded advanced training and greater participation in the running of the missions. Such dissenting voices were beginning to be heard during the late 1940s. Many nationals felt that the process of indigenisation was too slow, either by not giving adequate training to the nationals, or not giving them a greater part to play in the running of the missions. This area too created a lot of tension, suspicion, and misunderstandings between the missionaries and nationals.

10. Missions in search of an Indigenous Formula: The nationalist movements of the 1940s taught Christian missions lessons. It became quite certain that Nigeria might become independent, perhaps by the mid-1950s. Questions and fears arose in the minds of Christian missions. If Nigeria should become independent, what would happen to the missionary enterprise? What would become of the nationals who had become Christians? Would Christian Missions be kicked out? Would mission institutions and churches be nationalised? Solutions to these issues were sought out by Christian missions.

a. Forging a Common Front. Christian missions were faced with two major problems: (1) the unfriendly attitude and the regulatory policies of the Colonial Administration; and (2) the radicalism of nationalists. Their response to these twin problems was in turn, and in itself, an indigenisation process.

Christian missions, operating within a colonial segregated and hierarchical structure of Northern Nigeria, were forced to form a common front in order to fight successfully against the obnoxious colonial regulatory policies. The common front of Christian missions was formed in the following ways as pointed out already:

- 1) From 1910s-1930s, Conference of Missions in Northern Nigeria, consisting of SIM, CMS, SUM, UMS, DRCM, and a few others;
- 2) From 1940s-1950s, Annual Meeting of the Representatives of Missions in Northern Nigeria (AMRM), consisting of SIM, CMS, SUM, UMS, DRCM, and a few others;
- 3) From the early 1950s to the late 1950s, Joint Meetings between AMRM (North), the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN, South), and SIM (since SIM refused to join CCN and AMRM).

Christian missions used these three forums for fellowship as common forums of deliberating and resolving their common problems, on the one hand, and addressing and confronting the Colonial Government and nationalist issues, on the other. Because of the fears of what might become of the missionary enterprise and the indigenous Christians, Christian missions worked tirelessly in the early 1950s to ensure that a clause guaranteeing religious freedom and human rights was enshrined in both the Regional and National Constitutions.

Protestant Christian missions in Southern Nigeria organised an ecumenical forum in the late 1930s which later became the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN). The primary function of CCN then was to develop a common ground approach and policies governing missionary activities in the area of education, medical and other causes, on the one hand, and also how to integrate mission policies with that of the Colonial Government. CCN became a senior partner to the AMRM in Northern Nigeria. The Protestant missions in both the South and the North worked very closely in helping to deal with the peculiar religious and political issues of Northern Nigeria. In the 1950s, the Protestant missions in Northern Nigeria (AMRM) and the Protestant missions in Southern Nigeria (CCN) held annual joint meetings and discussed matters of mutual interests. Later, AMRM of the North joined CCN. SIM was the only Mission in the North that refused to join CCN. Later, (SIM was instrumental in forming the Nigerian Evangelical Fellowship (NEF) in 1962). Thus, Christian missions of the North and those of the South came together to form one body in the CCN.

The Colonial Administration, both in the South and North, showed great interest in what Christian missions were doing. The Colonial Government had its representatives in both CCN and AMRM. In the North, when AMRM joined CCN in 1948, Northern Advisory Education Council (Protestant) (NEAC) was formed. This Body, just like CCN, became an intermediary between Christian missions in the North and the Colonial Administration. Its primary function was to co-ordinate missionary education, medical, literature work, etc. and to present the needs of missions to the Colonial Government. Government representatives usually attended NEAC meetings.

The Colonial Administration in a similar fashion, dealt separately with the Roman Catholic Secretariat. Catholics and Protestants were

treated separately through their ecumenical bodies. Through out the colonial era, Catholics and Protestants never had a common forum until in the mid-1970s when the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was formed).

Before the merger of the two blocks, AMRM and CCN, Protestant Christian missions in Northern Nigeria usually contacted the CCN based in Lagos to help them fight some causes for them. The issue of political independence and religious liberty and freedom of worship became paramount in the early 1950s. The Protestant missions in the North did request the CCN to keep up the pressure on the House of Representatives in Lagos on these religious and political matters until when they phased out AMRM and joined CCN.

On the 20th of April, 1955, the SIM and the CCN wrote a joint statement which was presented to the Civil Secretary of the Northern Region of Nigeria. The primary reason for such a joint statement was stated thus,

As a result of the written and sometimes verbal conditions which have recently been set upon missionaries by certain Residents of the Northern Region acceptance of which we have deferred, we desire to discuss the entire position of religious bodies working in the Northern Region. (SIM Archives, Toronto)

In this joint statement, Christian missions raised a number of issues, but prominent were the issues of religious freedom and human rights. They argued,

The position therefore is that it is the minority religions rather than Islam which require protection. In the predominantly Moslem areas the adherents of these minority religions are small and powerless in comparison with Islam; in the predominantly pagan areas the rulers are often Moslem. The need therefore is to ensure that such minorities are guaranteed the ordinary human rights. Lord Lugard's statement that "all were free to worship God as they please" should be made applicable to these minorities.

The Christian Council of Nigeria, therefore, and the Sudan Interior Mission, in association with this Council, request the British Administration, as representative of one of the signatories to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights to take the initiative in order to ensure that the proposed

Regional Constitution includes a clause guaranteeing religious freedom comparable to the above statement by Lord Lugard and to Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration. (SIM Archives, Toronto)

This is just one of many statements, memoranda, and letters which Christian Missions sent to both Lagos and Kaduna. While Christian missions were addressing the issues of religious freedom and human rights to the colonial masters and nationalists, the need to train and develop national church leadership became quite obvious; should they be kicked out at independence by the nationalists.

b. Missions Strategies. The prevailing socio-political situation of the late 1940s and the early 1950s left Christian missions with no choice but to train and develop national church leadership who would take-over the mission work. The missions addressed the situation at two fronts: the political approach and the ecclesiastical approach.

1) Political Approach: Politically, the missions advised nationals to develop strategies of ensuring the inclusion of religious freedom and human rights in the constitutions of both Lagos and Kaduna as stated already. Nationals were advised to do research on Christian members of the House of Representatives, Lagos and Christian members of the House of Assembly and House of Chiefs, Kaduna. These Christian members were to be acquainted and educated on Christian rights and the dangers of losing such rights in Independent Nigeria. In the following paragraphs, we present some strategies of both missionaries and nationals for solving this problem.

After SIM pulled out of the AMRM in 1948 as pointed out already, the remaining Christian missions in the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) and the SIM continued to hold consultations as usual on crucial issues affecting the operations of missions. 1955 was a significant year during which Christian missions in Northern Nigeria began to address seriously the political developments in Nigeria.

Religious freedom was just one aspect of politics. Christian missions played a significant role in giving guidance and direction to the national Church leaders, but did so in the background. The nature of Middle Belt politics was described in the following words of Mr. C.H.C. Edwards of the SIM,

From what the above members of the two Houses said I understand that the United Middle Belt Congress is making it one of the conditions of their alliance with the N.P.C. party that a clause on religious freedom is included in their policy. From a private confidential conversation I had with M. Dawuda of the Northern House it seems that the N.P.C. is not going to ask for self government for this Region in 1956. On this understanding the Middle Belt people will forego their demands for a separate zone at this stage provided that the N.P.C. will guarantee religious freedom to all classes throughout the region. It seems to me that if the N.P.C. really values an alliance with the Middle Belt people and want to keep them in the one region, this may probably be a very good line of approach and by this means we may get the religious freedom clause into the Constitution through the Africans themselves whether or not the European administration has any particular view on it from their end. (SIM Field Letter No. 2)

The idea of developing a common political forum by the Christians of Northern origin received much encouragement from Christian missions which were afraid to be seen participating in politics. The Colonial Administration and the Northern political elites were very suspicious of Christian missions, especially the SIM in Southern Zaria, and more so when the Non-Muslim League (later changed to Middle Zone League) was formed in Zaria and Plateau Provinces. They saw this new political movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s as mainly Christian. However, this loose political movement was seen as a threat to the corporate existence of Northern Nigeria. Those who played an active and leading role in this new political movement were mainly products of the SIM and SUM.

The political approach of the Christian missions to the prevailing political situations in Northern Nigeria in the late 1940s and the 1950s did influence the development, formulation, and implementation of missions indigenisation principles in general. The politics of independence did affect the processes of indigenisation within Christian missions and national churches.

2) Ecclesiastical Approach: The most important step towards indigenisation was not only the training of indigenous evangelists, catechists, and teachers, but the training, licensing, and ordination of some nationals to become pastors with authority to run the churches and carry out ministerial duties was also very important

Licensing and ordination were very important steps towards indigenisation and the formation of indigenous church leadership. As this fact was understood by nationals, it led to having great demands and putting much pressure on missions to liberalise licensing and ordination. This process was observed to be very crucial in giving nationals greater say and participation in Mission/Church leadership. Licensing and ordination were processes which granted recognition and conferment of leadership status on well-deserving nationals.

Early national church leadership took root in the processes of licensing and ordination. As more and more nationals were either licensed or ordained, African participation in Mission/Church matters and numbers grew. This also led to missions giving more responsibilities to the nationals, hence the development of indigenous Church leadership.

3) Hand-Over of Mission Work to Nationals: The philosophy of hand-over or the methodology of implementing the indigenous principles had to be worked out or developed by the Mission concerned. This philosophy simply meant that a Mission hand over its mission work, ministries, and operations in the Mission Field to the national Church which takes over the ministries and operations from the Mission. The hand-over or take-over became the historical incidence which both sides, the Mission and the Church anticipated, prepared, and accomplished as fulfilling the desired end of the Mission, the founding of a national Church.

The intended end of the missionary philosophy of the three selves was the establishment of the national Church, but this philosophy did not seem to have a methodology or the worked out process of handing over responsibilities to the nationals by the missionaries. It was somewhat related circumstantially to the colonial political philosophy of developing colonies towards independence in the 1940s and 1950s.

This concept of preparing the colonies for political independence by the colonial masters was also applied to Christian missions. It was also expected of Christian missions to prepare nationals to take over Church leadership and governance from the missionaries. The world political events of the 1940s and the 1950s in the colonies pressurised Christian Missions into preparing nationals to take over from the missionaries.

In Nigeria, the late 1940s and the early 1950s, witnessed a dramatic rise in nationalist activities and demands for political independence from Great Britain. During this period, Christian missions in Nigeria held a series of meetings on what to do if Nigeria should become independent by the 1950s. Constitutional questions on human rights and religious freedom were seriously raised by the Christian missions and national Christians.

It was feared that at independence missionaries and missionary work might cease to exist in Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria. This, however, led mission agencies to plan on founding national churches with government registration as a means of forestalling government take over of mission institutions at independence.

In the mission work, it was expected that nationals would replace missionaries. Nationalisation was measured by the number of nationals within the mission work. The goal here was to have more, if not all, nationals handling the mission work, while the expatriate missionaries should phase themselves out of mission work. In some extreme cases, moratorium was held as the norm or "missionary go home."

Looking at the performance of nationals, some were prone to ask: "Were the nationals who took over the mission work competent and skillful or were they adequately prepared to take over?" Some also argued, "It is one thing to take over, but it is another to know and fully implement the Goal and Objectives of mission ministries:" or "It is one thing to have a 'black face' on but it is another to know who calls the shots." These conflicting definitions of the philosophy of hand-over/take-over did not encourage a good mutual working relationship between missions and nationals.

Some aspects of Mission work have suffered terribly after the hand-over, and some have progressed well. Adequate preparation of competent and skilful nationals is quite essential, as well as their commitment to the concept of ministry and calling and full implementation of the goals and objectives of mission work. In general, nationals were not well prepared and groomed to take over from missionaries. Thus, the state of the Church and its relationship to the State and society reflect so much of the missionary legacy already outlined.

However, there are two crucial issues that need to be addressed: (1) the Church within the Nigerian State; and (2) the Church within the Nigerian contemporary society. These two important issues are taken up in the subsequent sections.

THE CHURCH WITHIN THE NIGERIAN STATE, 1960-1993

The previous sections have discussed at length the formation of the Church through the work of Christian missions in Nigeria. The scope of this paper and our own personal experiences did not allow for examining the missionary experiences in Southern Nigeria and especially the contributions of the Roman Catholic Mission. From background studies of the previous sections, it is important to state the continuity and similarities between policies of the Colonial Administration and that of the Nigerian State towards the Church after independence, which were by and large pro-Islamic. This reflects the dominance of the Northern political and military ruling class in post-colonial Nigeria.

From 1900s-1940s: Colonial Era

From 1900s to 1940s, the period was characterised by colonial policies of (1) religious non-interference; (2) separate development; (3) regulatory policies and control of Christian missions; (4) pro-Islamic bias and protection; and (5) entrenchment of Islamic power and dominance in Northern Nigeria.

The 1950s: Preparation for Independence

The 1950s were preparatory years for Nigerian independence in 1960. The major issue at stake was "Religious Liberty" and its inclusion in the Constitution. Both Christian missions and national Christians became politically alert and active in ensuring religious liberty after independence. Both the Colonial Administration and Northern political leaders gave assurance of religious liberty to all Nigerians. Muslim leaders in the North preached religious tolerance and liberty to both Christian missions and national Christians in the North after independence.

1960-1966: The First Republic and Fall of Nigeria

The Government of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North, after silencing all opposition in the North, re-asserted the power and dominance of Islam in the Northern System. The Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, asserted himself as the Apostle of Islam and turned his efforts at converting the non-Muslims. This singular act drove fear into Christians in the North for fear of possible islamisation of the entire North.

Islam became the gate way to Northern political fortunes and the sole determinant of who is a "true Northerner". The gains of the 1950s in terms of religious liberty and tolerance was fast giving way to religious intolerance and fears of forceful Islamisation. A combination of ethno-regional, religious and cultural factors and corruption led to the downfall of the First Republic.

Nigerian Foreign policy of the period was dominated by pro-Arab and Islamic principles as these cultural and religious factors became the centre piece of Nigerian Foreign policy.

1966-1979: The Military, Civil War and Religion

The military coup led Major Chukwuma Nzeogu Kaduna on January 15, 1966, brought an end to the short-lived First Republic. Soon after that Nigeria was plunged into 30 months civil war of Biafra. The war was prosecuted by the Head of State General Yakubu Gowon.

Religion played an important role as both Islam and Christianity were used to mobilise resources for the prosecution of the war. The break-away East, Biafra, was predominantly Christian. Even though General Gowon was a Christian, but being a Northerner, Islam was quite dominant and exerted powerful influence in Nigerian State policy-making. In some quarters, the war was seen as Islam versus Christianity. The 30 months civil war, 1966-1970, tested the theology of "war and peace" of the Church in Nigeria. The split Church on both sides of the divide supported the cause of each opponent. The churches on both sides supported the war with prayers and material contributions and human resources.

Soon after the war, Christian missions were expelled from the East and that was soon followed by Government take over of missions

schools and hospitals. Islamic and cultural sensitivities influenced greatly these State policies.

The formation of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the early 1970s introduced in a big way religion into Nigeria's politics. This was also an opportunity for Arab countries to assert their Islamic and cultural dominance in international politics. In 1973, OPEC and Arab nations influenced the general African (OAU) boycott and severing of diplomatic relations with Israel.

Nigeria also took up an observer status with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) during the same period and which in 1986, General Babangida signed Nigeria as a permanent member to date.

Generals Murtala Mohammed and Olusegun Obasanjo regime, 1975-79, introduced Islamic Sharia into Nigerian Constitution making and politics. Since then, the Islamic Sharia has remained an issue in Nigerian politics. The Constitution Drafting Committee of Rotimi Williams in the late 1970s had serious debates about the place of Islamic Sharia in the constitution.

This period also witnessed the response of the Church to the rising power of Islam in Nigeria. The Church at this time saw the need of forming an ecumenical forum and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was formed in the mid-1970s. This religious Body was predated by earlier missionary ecumenical bodies, such as, AMRM, CCN and NEF.

The Second Republic: 1979-1993

During the Shagari's regime, religion became quite prominent, especially the Muslim Pilgrimage matters. The State became very partial in handling this religious issue, where Islam was the favoured Government religion to the neglect of Christianity. Even though Nigeria was defined as a secular State by the 1979 Constitution, the State, however, continued to be heavily involved in religious matters.

Alhaji Shehu Shagari created a Muslim Board to advise him on Islamic matters and which raised protests and rejections from Christian quarters. This fact also reveals Government discriminatory policy toward the non-Muslim and its preferential attitude toward Islam.

The Maitatsine riots at Kano in 1982 and the subsequent ones brought to light the increasing erosion of religious tolerance between

Islam and Christianity, especially in the Northern States of Nigeria. Government involvement in religious affairs increased the frequency of religious riots in the 1980s and the 1990s. The ambivalent attitude and approach of the State in religious matters gave opportunities to frequent religious riots in the Northern States in the 1980s and the 1990s.

The Regimes of Generals Buhari and Babangida, 1984-1993

General Buhari amended the "personal" definition of Sharia in the 1979 Constitution which aroused counter reactions from Christians.

In 1986, the General Babangida's Regime sought to redefine the secularity of the Nigerian state by enlisting Nigeria as a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). This political act almost brought the nation to ruin. The Muslim-Christian rivalry was inflamed and heightened. This incidence also almost ruined the Debates of the Constituent Assembly in 1989 on the Sharia issue. The Military had to intervene and stopped the Debates on Sharia since it was capable of destroying the existence of Nigeria as one indivisible political entity.

In 1992, General Babangida normalised relations with the State of Israel. This was a unique and unusual move by a Head of State who himself was a Muslim.

Religion and Sharia were dominant socio-political values and factors of the Colonial North while that of the South was religion and custom. The Northern political elites who dominated the Northern System had their socio-political values of religion and Sharia congruent with the Northern System. This politico-religious base was shifted to Lagos during the military regimes which were dominated by the northern military class. This later resulted in a powerful Islamic dominance of the State from the 1970s to the 1990s.

Islamic control of the military, politics and diplomacy in Nigeria has kept the Church on the sidelines and thereby weakened its position of influence in political matters. The battle ground between Christianity and Islam is in the Northern States. Almost all religious riots since the 1980s to the present have taken place in the North and only one took place at the University of Ibadan. Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi have been the hot-beds of religious riots.

As outlined above, the Church in Nigeria is gradually losing its influence, especially in political and social matters. The social and religious position of the Church are taken up in the next section.

THE CHURCH AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES

Contemporary social issues of Nigeria have compounded the problems of the Nigerian State and citizenship and therefore make the work of the Nigerian Church even more difficult and complex. For this reason, the Church in Nigeria must take up its social role and responsibilities seriously, given the state of Nigerian condition today. The Church cannot be an effective witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ if this fact is neglected. Effective witness of the Gospel must have to address the present Nigerian condition. What is the nature of contemporary Nigerian condition which the Nigerian Church must address?

In summary, the Nigerian condition can be described thus:

Social and Cultural Issues

1. Family disintegration and break down of family values
2. Ethnicity, tribalism and regionalism and sectionalism
3. Educational problems, and break down of the educational system, rising illiteracy and neglect of professional ethics
4. Problem of urbanisation and rural migration into cities
5. Abuse and misuse of drugs, etc.
6. Armed robbery, assassinations and violence
7. Communal and ethnic clashes and riots

Political Issues

1. Leadership problems in both the Church and State
2. Problems of Church-State relationship
3. Problems of multi-party political system
4. Problems of military dictatorship and militarism
5. Lack of a viable political system and peaceful co-existence between ethno-regional political centres
6. Problems of democratisation and elections
7. Problems of population control
8. Problems of foreign policy

Economic Issues

1. Prevailing poverty

2. Unemployment
3. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), and external debt
4. Distress, corruption and collapse of the banking industry
5. Environmental issues
6. Industrialisation, creation and distribution of wealth and brain drain
7. Over dependence on oil revenues and underdevelopment of other economic sectors

Judicial Issues

1. Problems of human and civil rights and arbitrary detentions
2. Problems of public accountability and corruption
3. Bureaucratic bottlenecks and miscarriage of justice
4. Rise in crimes and "pen-robberies"
5. Prison congestion

Religious Issues

1. Rise of new religions and cults
2. Religious fundamentalism, intolerance, riots and violence
3. Religious persecution in some states
4. Problems of religious pluralism and secularism
5. Problems of religious politics
6. State's preferential and differential treatment of religions and religious groups
7. Proliferation of new theologies, preachers and churches

Other Issues: Aids, prostitution, abortion, pornography, cults and secret societies, polygamy, etc.

The above socio-political issues reflect generally the moral, spiritual and ethical social order in Nigeria and that the Church in Nigeria has to contend with this social order. It is important to note that the British Colonial Administration established the Nigerian State based upon certain principles of imperialism, racial or tribal inequality and differential and preferential treatment of ethnic groups or regions. The continuity of some negative values and unjust pre-colonial and colonial structures in Nigeria pose many problems for the Nigerian State and citizenship. The role of the Church is to address the decay of this moral, spiritual and ethical situation in Nigeria.

The Search for a Viable Political System

The search for legitimate and viable political system and structure in Nigeria where ethnic or class or religious conflicts can be managed, accommodated and moderated must address itself to the definition of

the State as a moral institution. The role and function of the State has always been assumed, especially in Nigeria. What is the legitimate basis for the existence of the State? What moral or ethical principles is the State founded upon? State laws, decrees, statutes, policies and pronouncements are founded upon what basis? The concept of the State used here refers to "a politically organised community with clearly defined territorial boundaries and government". From a Christian Traditional State is an institution divinely ordained by God. The Holy Bible states: "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1b).

The State was ordained by God as an instrument of justice and judgement. The State as "government" is a representative of God's sovereignty, righteousness and justice on earth. It, therefore, means that the State in dealing with her citizens, she must do so under God's sovereignty, righteousness and justice. From this definition, what then is the difference between the Church and the State?

The divine origin and legitimacy of the State as an instrument of God's justice in human society makes it a moral and ethical institution. The State as a moral and ethical institution must then uphold the following ideals:

- a. The State is morally accountable to God and her citizens.
- b. The State must uphold its entire citizenry in a "a solidarity and equality of the human family" of all groups in the state
- c. The State must respect and honour the historical freedoms of all persons as a pre-condition for effective political and economic participation; and
- e. The State must acknowledge the reality of its limitations and sin in human society and, therefore, the need to control (limit) economic and political power (adapted).

A normative framework based upon the concept of social justice needs to be developed and which should form the basis of evaluating the legacies of protracted injustice, distorted human participation, continuity of unjust structures, and acts of social and moral indiscipline that are rampant in Nigeria today. Given the current state of the Nigerian State and the nature of citizenship, the following normative questions need to be raised: What solutions and suggestions can we offer for a just social order? What normative guidelines which

transcend ethnic, religious, cultural, class or personal proclivities can we use to order social relations and institutional practice? What values should form the basis of national integration or consensus, harmony, mutual understanding, co-operation among ethnic or religious groups? What values should be used to build a just participatory and sustainable social order? How can we correct the inherited unjust structures and social values of inequality, insecurity and incompatibility? Herein lies both the opportunity and the responsibility of the Church in developing a theology of the State, society and social action to address the ills of Nigeria. There is a Christian response to some of these contemporary issues which is quite important to our understanding of the role of the Church in the 21st Century. The contemporary Christian response is grossly inadequate and lacks a relevant theology that is biblical and contextual. This aspect is highlighted in the next and concluding section.

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

There are numerous issues confronting the Nigerian Church as it approaches the 21st century. These issues can be classified as ecclesiological, social, and theological. The response to these issues reflect a general uncoordinated Christian approach by individuals, churches and quasi-organisations.

Ecclesiological Issues

There is an unprecedented number of new churches emerging everyday in the urban centres. For example, in Maiduguri the capital of Borno State, in an area outside town, there are over 50 different churches within a three hundred yard walk. The proliferation of independent and charismatic churches in urban centres across the country is indeed an alarming and rising phenomenon.

The belief in the priesthood of believers has given many Nigerian Christians the confidence to claim direct access to God and hear His calling over their lives. This belief coupled with the belief in the ability of the Holy Spirit to teach and empower a believer has led the emergence of many self-made Christian leaders. Such leaders find a

place of worship no matter how small, usually it is in a room. Then they gather people around themselves. As soon as possible, they buy a public address system. There is a new church which has less than ten members but it has a very loud public address system. Another church with less than a hundred members has musical instruments and a public address system worth hundreds of thousands of *naira*.

These spontaneous and self-expressive churches are springing up as a reaction against the traditional "docile" churches. People prefer the modern leadership and charismatic personality that attract people. This problem of spontaneity and charisma is a matter of concern for Roman Catholic and Protestant mainline and older churches. Even the Muslims are confronted with this modern phenomenon.

Many of the modern charismatic leaders started as a reaction against the established churches. These leaders were modest, wore informal clothes, abhorred titles, and resented being ostentatious. But today, the same leaders wear the latest designer clothes, expensive jewellery, and Rolex watches. The title Bishop is now acceptable to bear. They ride Mercedes Benz and even Jet planes. They seek media attention and wide publicity. One of these church leaders in Jos started about fifteen years ago and was homeless himself. He was squatting with someone and was the leader of an interdenominational couples' group. He converted some members of this group to form his core members. Today, he pastors a one thousand member congregation. Their place of worship is called a cathedral and he lives in the millionaires' quarters in Jos. He has a secondary school and was recently awarded an honorary doctorate degree which the media were invited to cover.

The Church needs to address the Youth Culture of today. Their mode of worship is the same regardless of the denomination one finds himself. Charismatic form of worship which encourages self-expression and loud music has become a part of the menu. They are highly artistic and visual oriented, thus their love for music to the neglect of Bible Study and theology. Many churches spend hundreds of thousands of *naira* in order to buy musical instruments. It is now a fad for each church to have its own band. Many of these same churches complained when they were asked to pay six thousand *naira* to buy a set of books worth over fifty thousand *naira* for their pastors. Pulpit and teaching ministries have been overshadowed by the music and media ministry.

Self expression in worship is highly welcome because it broadens the base of participation. However, the church needs to find a way of ensuring that these youths are grounded in the Word of God. This is essential if the Church of tomorrow is to have a solid foundation.

The efforts of Women Liberation movement, Feminist theology, and most recently the Beijing conference are being felt the world over. In the Nigerian Church, women form a majority of the believers. In ECWA, it is an open secret that a substantial part of the Church's income comes from the women. Gender issues are very rife in the society the church inclusive. They are no longer content to be observers in the church or the society. Attention needs to be given to clearly define the role of women within the church and larger society. Our women want more active roles. The egalitarian nature of the body of Christ, we believe, sheds light on this issue.

Contemporary ecclesiological issues are many and these require serious attention of the Church.

Social Issues

Across the world, there is a resurgence of ethnic and tribal identity. We have seen this in Europe and increasingly on the African continent. The church in Nigeria is not immune to this divisive ethnicity. Church elections are conducted along ethnic and tribal not along spiritual lines. This cankerworm needs to be addressed by the Church because it weakens the ability of the Church to mount any strong defensive or offensive strategies. If the Church is to address the problem of divisive ethnicity in the society, it must have resolved that problem for itself. Scripture's teaching on the unity of Christ's Body provides a way of overcoming this problem.

At the moment, Nigerian Government lacks credibility. There is a sharp decline in the state's ability to provide social services like education and health to its citizenry. There is no enabling environment for the private sector to grow. Government holds on to many parastatals and refuses to privatise them even though it is unable to run them efficiently. It is for this reason that power supply and communication, two basic necessities for development, are almost completely grounded in the nation. The government continues to consolidate its powers and seek to wield control over every area of the

lives of its citizenry despite the fact that it lacks the machinery to accomplish this. The Church needs to convince the Government that it is a major stake holder in the society and that the Government by not sharing power may engender frustration and anarchy within the society.

In part due to the depressed economic situation of Nigeria, there is the intrusion of materialism that has since escalated to the level of obsession. This concern cuts across denominations. God's blessings are measured in material and physical terms. Many modern preachers point to their 'condition as an indication of God's approval of their ministry. Their congregations are told to expect their own "miracle." But before they can experience this, they have to sow "seed money." A few years back, a popular preacher came to Jos for a crusade. He asked those who wanted to become millionaires to step forward and give ten thousand *naira* as "seed money." One ECWA pastor was among the potential millionaires. Today, four years later, he is not yet a millionaire. Partly due to the harsh economic situation in the country, many are looking for an easy way out of their discouragement and despair. They are looking for quick ways "miracle money" to alleviate their situation. This message which sounds very convincing and biblical is popular among many people because God appears to be behind it. The Church in Nigeria should respond to this kind of materialist conception of Christianity because it is a fad. After the passing away of these economically hard times the message would lose its relevance and the members would be left aloof.

Nigerian educational system has nearly broken down. The educational system from the primary to the tertiary level is suffering a great malaise. Graduates of most government primary schools can barely read. Those who graduate from the secondary schools hardly fare any better. The Church used to be a major participant until in the late 1960 and early 1970s when the Government took over Christian schools and introduced the Universal Primary Education. Concomitant with this today we have an educational system that is on the brink of collapsing. The return of the Church to educational training is laudable. In Jos, almost every denomination has a primary school or at least a nursery school. Many Christian secondary schools and at least one university in Benue State exist as a testimony to the way the Church

feels. The question is not how many schools there are but how well they are run and what its graduates can do.

The decay in morality and ethics is very depressing. Corruption has infiltrated all levels of the society. The disheartening thing is that there is not a place one could go to have the injustice corrected. Everyone appears to be doing what is right in his/her eyes.

What is the state of the body politic in Nigeria? It has been infected to the core by suspicion, political rancour, dominance by a minority or majority, intolerance, and unwillingness to compromise resulting in tension, fear, lack of trust within the national body politic. It is obvious that for any progress to be made, people must have an independent body that can be trusted to arbitrate between all of these various interest groups. The Church stands a very good chance of fulfilling this role. The Church in Nigeria needs to respond to this need immediately because this problem greatly threatens the ability to build a genuine democracy and the very existence of national unity.

The Church has been isolated from the society for too long. It has responded only to issues that affect it directly. It has departed from the missionary theory of the Bible and the Plough. This drift began before indigenization of the Church. The proliferation of NGOS (non-Governmental Organisations) is an indictment of the Church and the State. The return of the church to this philosophy is a welcome development but there is still more that can be done. This outlook needs to be maintained in the 21st century because the nation is in a seriously weakened state and it will take some time to get out of this lethargy and assume its full responsibility for its citizenry. The Church should develop a theology of development and physical needs and not leave the action in this arena exclusively to NGOs.

Theological Issues

The Nigerian Church is experiencing an unprecedented resurgence of cultic, occultic, witchcraft, and demonic activities. The Church appears to be a reflection of the current society. The Government is worried about the increase of cultic and occultic practices in the universities. In fact such activities threaten the safety of other students because ritual killings have been reported in the universities.

The Church reflects this reality of the society. About a decade ago, discussions on occultic and demonic activities were not part of the Church discourse. Everyone knew that these things existed but they were connected with traditional religion not Christianity. But today, there are allegations against and even accusations of Church members, even elders, and pastors of being involved in witchcraft. Stories about demonic activities abound. Recently, in one of our chapels somebody told the story of people getting married to demons or people being initiated into cults without their consent. Scary stories are told about how innocent school children are initiated in primary schools. One of our friends died recently and his seven years old son is being accused of being among those who caused his death. Now it is nearly impossible for any death to be natural. All deaths are now believed to be caused by someone. This is a complete reversal to the traditional worldview. What can the Church do to restore a balanced biblical worldview?

The indigenous Church ought to be self-governing, self-governing, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. The Nigerian Church is making great strides in sending missionaries. The theology of the priesthood of all believers and individual zeal and courage has contributed to the rise of many indigenous missionary organisations. This led to the formation of Nigeria Missionary Association (NEMA) which comprises missionary organisations. The stories of some of these missionaries tell of sincere personal love and commitment to Christ and the gospel. There is the story of a young man who heard the call to go to Sudan through reading about Sudan in the newspaper. His strategy was to get his masters degree and then go to Sudan to do his doctorate. He has since gone to Sudan and is having a fruitful ministry there as a student-missionary. Many at great personal risks have gone as professionals to many Muslim countries that otherwise closed to missionaries.

The Church needs to encourage and harness this personal spirit. The individual zeal is stronger than the traditional church commitment to missions. The established churches need to be more resolute in allocating substantial percentage of their resources to missions. In many churches the least paid Christian workers are the missionaries. They engage in their task at great risks to their lives and that of their families. Often they do not have good medical care and their children are without education. The church needs to address these issues.

A young man from an evangelical background like ECWA was in search of quick place where he can be trained for six months. He said that he had a ministry goal thus he wanted a place where this immediate need could be met. Just recently a church from Ghana asked us to assess the certificate of someone who got his BA in theology in 1992, got his MA in 1993 and his ThD (Doctor of Theology) in 1994. Many are turning to these schools to get immediate certification. How can the Church respond to such needs without capitulating to the pragmatism and shallowness that mark the contemporary mentality?

The dearth of theological reflection in the Church is alarming. But an abundance of popular theology or "sticker" theology, there is. Such theologies as "No weapon fashioned against me shall prosper" etc. can be found in cars, buses, offices, homes, and every imaginable place. They are meant to deter those with evil intentions and be some kind of quasi protection for the Christian.

However, such theologies are able to hold as long as the glue on them lasts. Under the hot Nigerian sun of trials and difficulties, the glue holding them are quick to lose their stickiness resulting in many Nigerian Christians returning to their traditional religions to find answers. There is probably the will to do theology but not the know how. Many lay people have made commendable attempts to do theological reflection--Non-Formal Theology (NFT). Through NFT, theologians can provide guidance for the laity by engaging in NFT. The Church needs to find a way of encouraging and stimulating rigorous academic theological reflection. This is inevitable if the African Church is to plant deep roots and offer leadership to the rest of the Church universal.

The Church in the 21st century must be genuinely committed to the development of theological education. The Church needs to develop graduate theological education. In spite of the strength Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, they do not have a reputable graduate theological institution. The Nigerian Church needs to meet these challenges in the 21st century. The Nigerian universities have been offering Master's and Doctorate for close to four decades. The Church needs to train its members to be able to minister and respond to the needs of the contemporary situation.

If Nigeria is to be a democratic society, the Church must address some of these problems squarely. The percentage of Christians within the Nigerian population clearly suggest that the Church cannot stand and watch these issues with apathy.

Success in dealing with divisive ethnicity and the moral decay rife in the society will help reduce the social conflict. There is a school of thought among social scientists that the solution is in finding the right theory. But the experiment of the world has not been as successful.

CONCLUSION

The solution to this problem would need to begin with the Church developing a theological focus. Theological education is still lagging far behind the secular education. Nearly over three decades since Nigerian universities started awarding doctorate degrees in various fields, the Church does not have a reputable graduate school that offers even masters degree. The church in Nigeria suffers from the abdication of the intellectual arena that characterises evangelical Christianity in America. Whatever theological institutions that are developed must have commitment to serious scholarship as part of their concern. As we have noted earlier, the emphasis seems to be on practical training. Such a concern while commendable is not sufficient.

The ecumenical approach holds great promises for ways of resolving some of these issues. No single church in Nigeria can successfully address the issues on the Nigerian scene. CAN which embraces all the major Church Groupings in Nigeria, such as, (1) the Catholic Secretariat; (2) CCN; (3) Organised African Independent Churches; (4) TEKAN/ECWA; and (5) Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), is the beginning of something positive. It shows that Nigerian Christians can co-operate and accomplish certain goals. The lessons from the various mission organisations' effort during the colonial era point to the kinds of possibilities open to the Nigerian Church.

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HE WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING
The Salvation Experience of an
African Executive
Acts 8:26-40

Dela Adadevoh

This article drives home some important principles of evangelism by examining the biblical narrative of the Ethiopian Eunuch. It is an insightful and delightful exposition of a well known biblical narrative but from a distinctive perspective. Originally, this paper was delivered at a plenary session during the recent Amsterdam 2000 conference of itinerant evangelists, July 29-August 6, 2000.

The Ethiopian¹ official in this passage is referred to as the Head of Treasury for the Government of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. He was the equivalent of a Minister of Finance for a national government. The word ‘Candace’ referred to a title of the Queen of the Ethiopians. It was not an actual name of the individual, but rather that of the dynasty.² It is like the title of Pharaoh, used for Egyptian kings. It is significant to note that this **Mr. Dela Adadevoh** is the Campus Crusade for Christ International Vice President for Africa, Middle East and Central Asia. Born in Ghana, he earned a BS (Honours) in Chemistry from Kwame Nkrumah University in 1979, an MA from Azusa Pacific University in 1994 and is currently completing a Ph.D. in theology from Leeds University in UK.

¹ The word, “Ethiopian”, is a Greek word meaning “a man with a sun burned face”. Ethiopia and Cush (the Hebrew word meaning “dark skinned”) are used interchangeably in the Bible to refer to dark skinned Africans. See William D. McKissic, Snr., in *Beyond Roots: In Search of Blacks in the Bible* (Wenonah, New Jersey: Renaissance Productions, 1990), p. 20.

² A.R. Fausset, *Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), p. 110.

African provides evidence of women holding high positions or offices in governments and armies.

The appropriateness of designating this Ethiopian executive as a eunuch is questionable. Merrill Tenney explains that the word 'eunuch' means a male official of high standing in a royal court or household, and only secondarily implies a castrated person.³ What was a female political leader who held the highest office in the government of the Ethiopians and had male ministers of state serving under her leadership. This, though unusual, was not completely unique,⁴ since there is record of an African woman as Pharaoh over Egypt. Historical information from other regions of Tenney considers as the secondary meaning of 'eunuch' is the primary meaning attached to the word in its contemporary usage. According to Metzger and Coogan, the context largely determines whether the Hebrew word *saris*⁴ should be translated 'eunuch' or simply 'official'.⁵ This story of the Ethiopian official does not give enough clues to justify the conclusion that he was a castrated official. The main point here is that we are dealing with an African official of every high standing, whether or not he was a eunuch.

According to Luke, the Ethiopian official traveled in his own chariot to Jerusalem to worship. Since he was reading the prophecies of Isaiah on his way back home, it is obvious someone else was driving his chariot. The chariot could have been the personal property of the Ethiopian official or a government vehicle. The absence of any further elaboration on this issue by the author makes it safe to assume that the chariot was the personal vehicle of the Ethiopian government official.

³ Merrill C. Tenney & Steven Barabas (eds.), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976), p. 415.

⁴ The Hebrew word for *eunuch* according to both Merrill Tenney and Metzger Coogan is probably a loan word from the Akkadian word, *sa resi*, which means "he of the head".

⁵ Bruce M. Metzger & Michael D. Coogan (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 205.

The granting of permission by the government of Candace for a high ranking official to travel to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh could either mean that the Ethiopian government identified with the Judeo-Christian faith or that there was freedom of religion in Ethiopia. There was also a route linking Africa and Jerusalem, establishing the possibility of cultural exchanges between the Jews and Africans prior to and during the period of the inauguration of the Christian faith.

The Ethiopian official was a highly educated African who took keen interest in understanding prophecies and other texts concerning the God of the Jews and all peoples. This is quite consistent with the records on other educated Africans who served in the governments of Judah and Israel as administrators. There is the example of Jehudi (Jeremiah 36:11-26) who read the prophecies of Jeremiah recorded by Baruch to Jehoiakim, King of Judah. There is also the example of Ebed-Melech, an educated African official who served in the palace of Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38:7). Zedekiah was made King of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (Jeremiah 37:10). The above examples point out that highly educated Africans served directly with different governments in Israel. It is possible that they and other Africans in Jerusalem passed on what they learned about Yahweh and later on Jewish Christianity to their fellow Africans who were living in Africa.

This explains the interest of the Ethiopian official in the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. The Ethiopian official was reading the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the sufferings and the death of Jesus Christ, but could not understand it. The Ethiopian official was not lacking in the intellectual ability to comprehend the passage but rather the understanding of the spiritual sense and significance of the messianic prophecy. The Ethiopian official was reading aloud Isaiah, and Philip, who in obedience to the Spirit's call had come alongside to listen, asked the Ethiopian official if he understood what he was reading (Acts 8:30).

Philip's response to the call of the Holy Spirit to come alongside the official is a great example. Philip ran to the chariot the Ethiopian official was riding in. That is the kind of response that should characterise obedient servants of God. When it is certain

that God has called us to bring the good news to a particular people, we should make haste to serve God's purpose.

God's special calling on Philip to come alongside this African executive shows His love for Africans and all the people of the world. The Holy Spirit took the initiative to ensure that the gospel reached the interior of Africa. Such particularisation of God's grace toward Africa must inspire African Christians to live faithfully in a manner worthy of the gospel, as well as to be faithful in spreading the good news to other lands. African Christians should run like Philip did, full of the Holy Spirit and joy, in spreading the good news with all peoples of the world.

The response of the Ethiopian official was very much on target as a challenge to Philip. He said, 'How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?' (Acts 8:31). The transforming effect of the gospel on an individual's life is very much dependent on the person's grasp and understanding of the significance of the gospel message to his or her life. Such an understanding is only possible through explanation. This was the role Philip had to play as the evangelist of the gospel of Christ.

There are many people in the African Church today who have the religious zeal in the name of Christ, but do not understand the spiritual sense of the gospel message and its significance for their lives. Even though they sacrifice so much in terms of time, finances, and their very lives, they need evangelists and teachers who will explain the gospel message to them. A lot of our evangelism today has very little explaining in it.

Philip listened long enough to know what the Ethiopian official was reading and as such, the kind of explanation he needed. For evangelism to be effective, the evangelists need to listen and observe long enough to know what their audience is seeking to understand. It is only then that they are able to offer explanations that will touch their lives where it matters and bring them to the point of total surrender to the saving grace and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pre-packaged evangelistic messages that are insensitive to the questions people are asking will not match the effectiveness that we see in the ministry of Philip.

We are informed that Philip began with that very passage of Scripture that the Ethiopian official was reading (Acts 8:35), but did not end there. Philip continued and went on to present the whole gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian official believed and offered to be baptised when they came to some water down the road as they travelled together.

Effective evangelism begins with people where they are. The starting point of evangelism is to respond to questions that people are already asking; aspects of the self-disclosure of God that they are seeking to understand. Helping people understand what God is already doing in their lives prepares them to appreciate the complete gospel message. However, effective evangelism always has as its goal the presentation of the total gospel message, and the whole counsel of God.

People are helped to understand aspects of God's self-disclosure they are already striving to understand and then led through the rest of the gospel message.

Evangelism involves bringing people to the point of understanding and experiencing the whole gospel message and the whole counsel of God, beginning from where they are in their spiritual quest for salvation. Philip began with the very passage of Scripture the Ethiopian official was reading and then told him the good news of Jesus in its entirety.

The Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the Ethiopian official had to continue on his way. His whole life was one filled with joy and excitement. Luke put it well when he reported that the Ethiopian Minister of State "went on his way rejoicing". The joy of the Ethiopian official is a powerful evidence of the power and goodness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The person who was lost in his zeal, and pressured with the search for truth finally experiences liberation from the agony and pain of search and is ushered into a state of joy and jubilation. This liberating grace of the Holy Spirit should indeed be what we pray and work for, as we evangelise Africa, and the entire world.

Our vision is to bring many people who are zealous for things concerning Christianity and other religions to the point of discovering Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Saviour of all

humankind. It is our hope that such discovery will bring much jubilation and celebration to Africa and the world because of the liberating grace of the Holy Spirit.

The vision is to see Africans and all peoples of the world going on their way rejoicing and jubilating because they have understood and experienced the good news of Jesus, their Messiah and Saviour. May God raise up many obedient servants who will explain the gospel to the many in Africa and elsewhere, who are seeking to understand the love and salvation of Jesus Christ.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sundkler, Bengt and Christopher Steed
A History of the Church in Africa

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2000. xix + 1232 pp.

“A bitter pill which the majority of writers on Christianity and missionary activities in Africa should swallow is that they have not been writing African Church History ... [they write] as if the Christian Church were in Africa, but not of Africa”. This incisive critique by two notable Nigerian historians is used by Bengt Sundkler to preface his massive and magisterial effort to set the record straight. Bengt Sundkler (1909-1995) of Sweden was formerly a missionary in South Africa and Tanzania, and later professor in Church History at the University of Uppsala. Owing to his death in 1995, the project had to be completed and prepared for publication by Christopher Steed, his former research assistant and now instructor at Uppsala. Sundkler develops some prominent themes of his earlier works (most notably, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, 1960; *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed 1961; *Zulu Zion*, 1976) in stressing the indigenous African initiative during the progressive Christian evangelisation of this great continent. In fact, it is “a fundamental thesis of this book ... [that] the Western missionary arriving at any place in Africa always found that he had been preceded by some group of African Christians” (299).

The well-known and documented missionary enterprise is certainly not ignored, but Sundkler and Steed (hereafter, S&S) take pains to point out that this is only a small part of the full story. It is crucial to view the whole picture and hence also the vital, creative role that Africans themselves—kings and catechists, merchants and migrants, refugees and returnees, itinerant prophets and independent religious movements—played in this dynamic process of Christianisation. It is this particular local perspective, one that “focuses not on Western partners but on African actors,” which makes the book such a worthwhile, indeed indispensable, study.

S&S present a detailed, well-researched historical overview and evaluation that has some important contemporary theological and missiological implications, not only for the Church in Africa but also for Christianity world-wide.

In his personal introduction, Sundkler calls attention to several other principal concerns of his research. One is to demonstrate the close connection between the established mission-related churches and the so-called "African Independent Churches," which form such a distinctive, locally "charismatic" element of current Christianity south of the Sahara. Another interest was to present an ecumenical perspective by "highlighting Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Independent work ... [so that] both Catholics and non-Catholics might find an interpretation of the essential intentions and achievements of their respective churches". This is a worthwhile goal in view of the fact that, until recent times at least, there has not been a great deal of interaction or co-operation among these different macro-groups, as indeed was (and often still is) the case also among the different denominations of Protestantism.

A major problem that S&S faced in their treatment of African history is the "wide chronological discrepancy" among the different regions of African—North, West, East, Central, and South—in terms of religious proselytisation and development. In some parts of Africa, notably the north-east, Christian Church history goes back nearly 2000 years; elsewhere, especially in the inland areas, development has been limited to much more recent times. This led the authors to adopt what I felt was a helpful historical description on a more restricted, region-by-region basis but within some very broad time frames, namely: Part I—the first 1400 years, Part II—the "middle ages" (1415-1787), Part III—the long 19th century (1787-1919), Part IV—the Colonial years (1920-1959), and Part V—the age of "independent Africa" (1960-1992). Despite the great period of history and large area covered, the treatment is very complete and relatively balanced too, which might not be expected of a study this size. Ironically, however, it is the most recent period that appears to be the most thinly discussed (given the publication date of 2000), with adequate coverage petering out rapidly during

the final decade of the last century. This is reflected also in the otherwise extensive Bibliography of 48 pages.

In addition to their special focus upon the significant indigenous African contribution to "mission work" in Africa, S&S point out most, if not all, of the other important factors that have led to the relatively rapid growth of the Christian Church throughout the continent (except for the northern region, which due to the influence of Islam is a special case). In most instances, these topics are discussed diachronically as they happen to occur in the historical overview, not synchronically in extended sections. I would consider the following to be the most important of these strategic influences (in parentheses noting a particularly important exemplifying reference): use of the vernacular in popular communication in preference to a Western language (517-518); translation of the Bible, whether the whole or selected portions (157); a Scripture-based gospel message (309); effective preaching/sermonising (665-673); persistent and widespread lay witness (36-37), including that carried out by women (712) and the youth (392-393); travel to new areas via the rivers of Africa (303) and newly built railroads (865); the development of distinctive Christian hymnody and liturgy (916-917) as well as literature programs (743); increased training and use of national pastors (509) and "evangelists" or catechists (310); the widespread promotion of literacy (573) and education, including that for girls and young women (249-250); agricultural (363) and medical missions (307); the establishment of mission stations (312-313) and Christian communities (377). A study of some of these constructive influences within their historical setting could be of benefit to African churches today as they plan for the future in view of the significant changes that have taken place in the meantime.

Side by side with such positive promotional forces for numerical growth in Africa was a diversity of factors that definitely limited, hindered, or even prevented the Church's advance in different areas and at different periods of history. S&S deal with these honestly and often with keen insight as to their original cause or subsequent acerbation. Among the more serious of such obstacles to progress were: ecclesiastical rivalries and denominationalism; enforced or

ritualistic sacramentalism and sacerdotalism; doctrinal disputes and consequent factionalism; association (whether real or supposed) of the Church with slavery, colonialism, and/or apartheid; varied legalistic, paternalistic, or even prejudicial attitudes and practices on the part of Westerners; the imposition of Western cultural ideals and customs at the expense of African equivalents; debilitating tropical diseases and a high death rate among missionaries; inter-ethnic tensions and tribal conflicts; and the continual advance of Islam from the north and east. These factors are all well known of course, but a consideration of them in concrete historical contexts is always a salutary exercise. May we better learn to learn from history!

Along with the preceding, relatively straightforward positive and negative considerations are a number of others that are not so clear as to their ultimate impact and effect on the growth of the African Christian Church—or should one rather say, the Christian Church in Africa? This matter of designation is important and concerns the principal issue of controversy, which in one way or another involves the relative influence, past and present, of traditional religious beliefs and practices on various Christian churches. These would include specific instances such as: the use of indigenous symbolism and arts (painting, singing, instrumentation, dancing, dress, bodily decoration, etc.) in church buildings and during worship services; the communicative importance attached to dreams, visions, and possibly even divination; an appeal to rites aimed at combating sorcery and witchcraft; the continuation of certain “beneficial” protective and promotional magical practices; ancestral veneration through prayers, sacrifices, offerings, life-cycle and agriculture-related ceremonies. Such influences have been and continue to be debatable, even divisive—that is, depending on a group’s theological persuasion and beliefs with respect to what they regard to be a biblically-based Christianity. At times, through their lack of comment, S&S seem to be overly tolerant or uncritical of syncretism involving an accommodation with ancient ancestral rites and ceremonies, such as: the royal ancestral cult (61), sacrifices in times of calamity (181), “rain-making” rituals (474), dreams of divination (504), funerary libations (811), and miracle working

“prophets” (814). On the other hand, they might be congratulated for their “objective” record of the various sources that they utilise, leaving it up to readers to make their own valuation of such accounts. Furthermore, on occasion S&S do also gently warn against a Christianity of “adhesion” (96), which is simply “a thin veneer over a groundwork of solid traditional religion” (55).

This is not some long, dry, fact-saturated historical report. On the contrary, S&S quickly engage the reader by their generally clear, interesting, and informative manner of writing. Theirs is an easy style that is lightened by periodic, subtly humorous and ironic comments, but one that is also punctuated by many important insights and penetrating observations. Space limitations will not permit more than minimal illustration of this feature, but the few quotes following should be sufficient to whet the reader’s appetite. For example, concerning the existential significance of Christianity for the African believer, S&S state,

An observation in all parts of Africa would seem to be the view of Christianity as not only the way of New Life but also of the New Death. In a milieu where death was an ever present threat, the ‘New Death’—i.e., the new way of facing the threat and fact of Death—was recognised throughout the continent as something distinctly different (95-96).

Commenting on the irony that sometimes confused Christian principles and practice, they observe,

The attitudes of these young [missionary] men were not unique in the Protestant world of Africa prior to 1914. There were other zealots ... who desired to pull up the young [African] shoots from the soil in order to check whether they had begun to grow aright. Western actors in the drama insisted on the dictates of the Spirit, but overlooked the fact that a Church, on whatever foundation it starts, and however it develops, lives in a tension between ‘Institution’ and ‘Spirit’. Even the most ‘spiritual’ organisation necessarily develops its institutional frame, even though organisation must be, to some extent, informed by the Spirit through the Word and Sacraments administered there (246).

Despite their focus on the African initiative and honest portrayal of the obvious errors that were made by the Western message-

bringers, S&S do not degenerate into “missionary-bashing,” but regularly call attention to their considerable accomplishments, for example,

Western missions were often portrayed at the time as having destroyed the cultural values of indigenous peoples, particularly in Africa. The [1925 Rome] Exhibition eloquently demonstrated that some of the missionaries, not least in Africa, had other designs (630).

Then there is this accurate description of the power of African Bible-based preaching,

The village sermon must be appreciated against the background of a live, pulsating milieu with its tensions and afflictions, its witches and spirits, its fears and hopes and expectations, its sighs and tears, laughter and jubilation, and the Gospel text bringing the Holy Land with its demons and Beelzebub and its healing miracles close to the African village, and in the midst of all, the Christ, Son of God and Saviour of the world (667).

Finally, I cannot resist the following keen insight into the nature and practice of past efforts at Bible translating, an enterprise that is especially close to my own heart,

One looks with admiration at the efforts of Protestant missionaries who spent their lifetime at the task of Bible translation. There were sure to be linguistic limitations in the work, but a historian is bound to look at this work in terms of history. It is too easy to condemn by the standards of today’s linguistics what had been done previously in this field. *The team aspect of Bible translation needs to be underlined.* ... There was formed almost invariably a deep Christian fellowship between the foreigner and their African co-workers, the former always aware of his foreignness in this most central of missionary tasks and therefore aware of his constant dependence on his local co-workers, the real experts (1030, my emphasis).

The composition of Bible translation teams may have changed nowadays—being much more African in character—but

importance of close co-operation and mutual dependence surely remains.

There are several other excellent features of this history that are worth calling attention to. In addition to its lucid style, the text's overall organisation is enhanced by a helpful division into major and minor sections, all of which are provided with summary titles. Principal sections are normally prefaced by an introduction that is accompanied by a map of the particular area of Africa to be covered. A very detailed Name Index and Subject Index enables the reader to quickly locate persons and topics of special interest. Several succinct topical studies of important subjects are provided from time to time, for example, on: African religions, missionary societies, David Livingstone, Church strategies, Islam, preaching, healing practices, African church music, and Independent churches. S&S also make pertinent suggestions along the way about areas that could use further study as well as current puzzles that require additional research, for example: reasons for the surprisingly rapid conversion of the Igbo people in Nigeria (253), differing preaching styles among various denominations (668), the relationship "between Christianization in Africa ... and recruitment for jobs of discipline and order" (706), refugee peoples in relation to the society into which they move (796), a sociological study of those who were caught up in the East African Revival in the 1930s (864), and the varied evangelistic methods that were adopted on the coastal plantations of the Indian Ocean (872).

With so much positive to say about this book, could I have any criticisms? Indeed, there are a few, but they are relatively unimportant in relation to the whole: The inadequate treatment of the last decade has already been noted; hence the current AIDS pandemic in relation to medical missions is not mentioned (e.g., 674). The present three-page Epilogue could easily have been expanded to provide a summary at least of some more recent developments in the Christian history of Africa. The footnotes, though very many in number, are largely bibliographical in nature. They do indicate the extensive documentation that underlies this study, but little additional information beyond that supplied in the text is given. Nor is any sort of evaluation made of the relative

reliability of the sources that are cited—that is, in possibly questionable or doubtful cases (e.g., the information from mission archives). There are very few spelling mistakes in the text, which is rather amazing for a book this size that contains so many proper names of various kinds. There are also a handful of quotations that are left unattributed (e.g., 1025). I noted several errors of fact—for example, credit for the entire New Testament in Chichewa given to just one person, when a whole team was involved throughout (979). And I would disagree with several interpretations of the historical record, for example, that it was mere “fortuitous chance, almost fate” that led certain missions to begin work among particular African societies (311-312). Surely the Holy Spirit deserves a little more credit than that. All in all, however, there is precious little to complain about in this magnificent study.

On the opening publisher’s description of this book, it is claimed that it “will become the standard reference text on African Christian Churches”. I would heartily endorse that assessment of this exemplar of the historical genre. It is one of those essential books for the new millennium that needs to be displayed in every theological library worldwide. Having said that, I would also encourage the publishers to make a much more affordable (paperback?) edition available so that scholars, pastors, and teachers on the African continent can also have immediate personal access to a text that so completely and competently surveys their deep-seated Christian roots.

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Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter Editors
DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
BACKGROUND

A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship
Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000

The Dictionary of New Testament Background is the fourth and last in a series of New Testament dictionaries published by InterVarsity. The other dictionaries in the series include: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* and the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*.

This 1,328 page volume is a landmark publication with 153 acknowledged, international scholars with PhD's in their fields of expertise. It represents the latest scholarship with the most up-to-date resources in the field. Representing the international status of the dictionary are the two editors who come from both sides of the Atlantic. Craig Evans is professor of religious studies and the director of the graduate programme in biblical studies at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, Canada. Stanley Porter is research professor in New Testament at the University of Surrey, Roehampton, London. However, the contributors of these articles are primarily from North America and Europe, including Israel, with numbers coming from Australia and Singapore. No one from the third world is represented.

The dictionary focuses on the cultural cradle of the New Testament and is a major secondary source to study the contributions of the Apocrypha, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and early Christian literature for our understanding of the meaning of the biblical text. "The purpose of the present volume is to clarify the world of thought and experience in the light of which the New Testament should be read and the early Christian church understood."

This research tool is carefully designed to enable the student to achieve the maximum use of the book. Bibliographies are found at the end of each article which are placed in alphabetical order.

These articles are cross referenced in several ways to guide the student to other related topics treated in the dictionary. Five types of cross references are made within the articles for handy referral.

In this handy one-volume dictionary one can learn much of the background of the New Testament. Careful interpretation of Scripture not only requires a knowledge of the original languages. It is essential that one interprets the Scriptures within the biblical context, as well as the historical, geographical and cultural context of the times.

Herein is the value of this dictionary. One is able to research the New Testament background of the times. Assisting the student is a Scripture Index of twelve pages. There is also a Subject Index. By referring to the Scripture Index one can ascertain whether there is any reference in the dictionary to the biblical text under study.

These articles range in size from 500 words to 10,000 words. Because they have limited the number of topics to 300, the authors have been able to produce greater in-depth discussion within the restrictions of one volume.

A random survey of useful background articles include: Adultery and Divorce; Alexander the Great; Antioch (Pisidia), Apostolic Fathers; Archaeology and the New Testament; Art and Architecture: Greco-Roman; Asia Minor; Associations; Athletics. One can easily see that there is a gold mine of background information helpful to the better understanding of the biblical text.

Surely, this book is essential for New Testament scholars and teachers. It is also desirable for those intelligent and better educated pastors who want to probe the depths of meaning of the biblical text.

However, since the pastor desires to feed the sheep and not the giraffes, a pastor will need to pick his way through this erudite volume to glean those insights useful in expounding the text. For the strength of the dictionary becomes somewhat academic because it includes many articles related to discussion of primary sources and documents which provide us with this helpful background information.

A sampling of some of these articles include: Ahiqar; Apocalypse of Zephaniah; Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q371-372,

539); Aristeas, Epistle of; Beatitudes Text (4Q525); Catena (4Q177); Cave 7 Fragments (Qumran); Copper Scroll (3Q15); Damascus Document (CE and QD); Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen).

However, as one pages through the dictionary one is awed by the rich and enriching diet that awaits anyone who devours this compendium of New Testament background scholarship. We are compelled to agree with the view of David Noel Freedman when he says, "The breadth and scope of the dictionary on the one hand, and the depth of scholarship demonstrated on both small and large entries are notably impressive, and it is clear that everything that anyone might wish to know about the background of the New Testament is to be found in this massive work."

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Theological Advisory Group (TAG)
THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA TODAY

For details on purchasing this book see page 132

The Theological Advisory Group (TAG) of Scott Theological College has produced a number of books in its Theological Reflections series, which seeks to address issues of theological and pastoral concern in the African context. *The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa Today* is the most recent of them, and its aim is set out on the back cover: 'The purpose of this book is to provide the serious student of Scripture with a careful study of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit. It is intended for advanced students of the Bible and can be used as a textbook in theological institutions.'

It is a substantial work of 440 pages, including a bibliography and brief topical and biblical indices. There are two appendices of which the first deals with the development of the doctrine of the

Trinity and the second offers a history and evaluation of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. The main body of the book consists of 7 chapters, all but one prefaced with a brief narrative or description drawn from the African context, and each concluding with questions 'for review and further study' and a list of books 'recommended for further study'.

However, it is not simply intended to be a standard text on the Holy Spirit, but aims more specifically to address the controversies and divisions that surround the doctrine of the Spirit, particularly in the African context, and to do so in a conciliatory manner. Thus, while parts of the book do offer a standard textbook approach ('Who is the Holy Spirit?' and 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer'), others discuss the theology of the Spirit that emerges from particular sections of Scripture ('The Power of the Spirit in the Old Testament' and 'The Life-Giving Spirit in Luke-Acts'), and a very sizeable portion is directly related to the controversies which are the book's primary focus ('Pentecost: Baptism in the Spirit and the Initial Sign of Tongues'; 'The Fruit and the Gifts'; 'Those Controversial Gifts: Healing, Prophecy and Tongues'). The authors are addressing issues that are of central concern for contemporary African church life, and their goal is to develop a response that is soundly based on the testimony of Scripture to the Spirit and his work.

In general, the book repudiates most of the typical charismatic and Pentecostal distinctives. Thus, the authors argue against the view that the baptism in the Spirit is a work of God subsequent to conversion, and that speaking in tongues is the sign that it has taken place. They interpret Pentecost as a unique, unrepeatable act whose main significance was the birth of the church. They contend that being filled with the Spirit should not be equated with the baptism of the Spirit, and that it is more biblical to speak of one baptism and many fillings.

On the 'controversial gifts' - prophecy, tongues and healing - the authors are clearly sympathetic to the cessationist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, but find themselves unable to give it unequivocal support. However, they maintain that cessationism is true in practice: 'we cannot affirm that the gift of tongues has

ceased on the basis of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, but we can point to the dramatic change in the need for revelatory gifts with the formation of the canon of Scripture' (p.349). Thus they claim that these gifts had an absolutely essential and unique role in the New Testament era, but that it no longer exists. So, the gifts of apostle and prophet were foundational to the church 'because of their inspired and authoritative witness to Christ' (cf. Eph 2:20), but it is Scripture that fulfils that purpose for today. Tongues were a 'revelatory word-gift' akin to prophecy. Healings were 'sign-miracles' whose purpose was to authenticate the ministry of Christ and the apostles, and in practice miracles of the sort carried out by Christ and the apostles are no longer seen.

However, the authors identify the proclamation of the Word of God in preaching as an 'analogous gift of prophecy' although not identical to the revelatory prophecy of the New Testament and Old Testament eras. They recognise too that there is a need for Christians to encourage and admonish one another, but not with the authority of a prophetic 'thus saith the Lord'. They affirm that miracles may still happen and that the relevant teaching for the church today is to be found in James 5:13-16. Indeed, they express concern that many non-charismatic African churches have altogether missed the role of the church in ministering to and praying for the sick. They also accept the possibility that God may grant to some believers a gift of tongues for personal prayer, again analogous to but not identical with the 'sign-gift' and 'word-gift' spoken of in the New Testament, but they are clearly very doubtful about this: 'What assurance can anyone have that praying unintelligible syllables is genuine communication with God and not mere gibberish?' (p.350).

Moreover, despite its weighty critique of Pentecostal and charismatic teaching, the book recognises that the practice of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is often attractive because of the cold, shallow formalism and nominalism of so many churches that hold to the more traditional evangelical approach but show little evidence of the presence of the Spirit himself. In strong terms the authors explain why so many Christians abandon non-Pentecostal churches to go to Pentecostal ones: 'They leave because

the churches are living on a sub-normal plane .. It is often because of the failure of our churches to be fervent in prayer, zealous in witness, meaningful in worship .. ' (p.162). They concur with John Stott's judgement on the charismatic movement: 'there can be no question that God has used this movement to bring blessing to large numbers of people. .. The movement constitutes a healthy challenge to all mediocre Christian living and all stuffy church life' (p.153).

As the authors admit, this is a book for the serious student and its length will deter any who are looking for a quick and easily digested summary of the subject. It is good, therefore, to note that TAG has also produced a number of smaller studies on the same theme intended for 'lay people'. Nevertheless, in places the present work could itself have been abbreviated to make it more accessible. There is a degree of repetition with sometimes the same issues being worked over more than once. In the third chapter, for example, the authors discuss occasions recorded in Acts when the Spirit came on individuals or groups and some of the phenomena of Pentecost were repeated, as with the Samaritans, Cornelius, and the Ephesian believers in Acts 19:1-7. The relevant passages are then discussed again in chapter four in order to respond to Pentecostal and charismatic interpretations. Speaking in tongues is discussed on three separate occasions, in chapters four, six and seven. A substantial restructuring might have avoided such repetition, both reducing the length of the book and making its argument easier to assimilate. At the same time there might have been a little more on certain areas. Discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is somewhat limited despite its importance, and there is no systematic treatment of the distinct contribution of John's gospel to the doctrine of the Spirit as there is of Luke's.

Nevertheless, *The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa Today* is a significant and very useful work. It offers a thorough analysis and rebuttal of the charismatic position. The arguments are clearly explained and contextually applied, and the authors seek to be faithful in their interpretation of Scripture while avoiding the use of emotive and inflammatory language. Not everybody will agree with the conclusions, but it will repay careful study from both sides of the divide. It is at this level of serious and honest biblical reflection

that the issues raised by charismatic claims and practice need to be debated.

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Richard S. Hess & Gordon J. Wenham (eds.)

***MAKE THE OLD TESTAMENT LIVE:
FROM CURRICULUM TO CLASSROOM***

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 1998.
218 pp, ISBN 0-8028-4427-8, pbk. US\$ 15.00.

I came across this book by chance in the book exposition hall at a large theological conference. The names of the editors—Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham—made me pick it up, and half an hour later I bought four copies, for myself and for my postgraduate students from Tanzania and Madagascar. Why? Simply because I realised that this book addresses many of the questions we discuss outside the classroom.

The book is a collection of essays focusing on the teaching and studying of the Old Testament. Approaching both the Old Testament itself and the profession of scholarly interpretation of the Old Testament from an evangelical perspective, the 13 essays range from teaching undergraduates to supervising doctoral dissertations, and from a location in secular universities to theological seminaries. Most of the 13 essays go back to a Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament study group in Cambridge, but some have been commissioned additionally for the publication of this book. In the following I will first make a brief presentation of the 13 essays, then go a bit deeper into two of them, and finally make some concluding remarks.

The book is made up of three sections: (i) content, (ii) context, and (iii) communication. The first section suggests parameters for the content of the curriculum of Old Testament studies. Richard S.

Hess (1) examines the place of Old Testament within the curriculum of a theological college, and considers the place of Old Testament study in the overall aims of the college. Craig G. Bartholomew (2) outlines what he calls a post-liberal agenda for Old Testament study, emphasising the Christian context. And James McKeown (3) discusses the role of Old Testament theology in Old Testament study. The second section, which focuses on the context in which this curriculum is developed, includes the majority of the articles. Paul Barker (4) makes an appeal to teach the Old Testament in a way integrated with the New Testament, emphasising a biblical theology of the Bible. Robert L. Hubbard, jr. (5) shares his experiences of teaching the Old Testament in a North American theological seminary. T. Desmond Alexander (6) discusses various aspects of teaching the Old Testament in a secular university, whereas Gordon J. Wenham (7) outlines a model for teaching the Old Testament in a department of religious studies. Rebecca Doyle (8) shares her experiences of surviving as an Old Testament Ph.D. student, and Hugh Williamson (9) sees this from the other side, discussing various aspects of how to supervise Old Testament Ph.D. students. Then follows two essays with a non-western focus: Ida Glaser (10) discusses the teaching of the Old Testament in the context of Islam, and M. Daniel Carroll (11) discusses various challenges of teaching the Old Testament in Latin America. The third section addresses communication issues. David W. Baker (12) discusses models for learning and teaching biblical Hebrew. And Clive Lawless (13) reflects on the factors that determine the learning process, and how this should affect the teaching of the Old Testament. An appendix (28 pp.) gives an annotated Old Testament bibliography – from the perspectives of this book.

Let me go a bit deeper into two of these essays, and notice some of their relevance to evangelical contexts in Africa. The first is Richard S. Hess' essay (1), which examines the place of Old Testament study within a theological college. This context, Hess points out, primarily prepares the students for spiritual leadership and ministry, a context that must be reflected in Old Testament study too. On the one hand spirituality is crucial, as the spiritual

life of the lecturer and the students obviously have an impact upon how the Old Testament is appropriated for ministry. However, on the other hand spirituality is irrelevant, Hess claims, as the *sola scriptura* principle of evangelical Christianity demands that the skills that are developed and applied for Old Testament interpretation must be those that submit to objective evaluation. There is, accordingly, and this needs to be repeated also in African evangelical circles, no conflict between the spiritual, practical, and academic aspects of the study. Another important contribution is M. Daniel Carroll's essay (11) on various aspects of teaching the Old Testament in Latin America. Many African theologians and biblical scholars will recognise his description of difficulties and challenges. One is the various forms of limitations in physical resources, as financial constraints influence the capacity of both students and lecturers, and as it further makes the library situation (books, journals, articles, electronic tools) most difficult. Another aspect noticed by Carroll is the importance of mature mutual appreciation between first and two-thirds world scholars. The former tend to think that the only "really serious" academic work is done in North America or Europe, and the latter often exhibit a bit of an inferiority complex towards the West. A dialogue between the two is certainly necessary, and Carroll points out exchange of course plans, lecturers, and students as ways to initiate such dialogues.

Three concluding remarks. First, I am, once again, struck by the variety of approaches to the teaching and studying of the Old Testament, and as such the book challenges me to go back to the classroom with new ideas about how I can organise my lectures and seminars. Secondly, if anyone would tend to doubt, the book demonstrates that evangelical scholars by no means form a marginal phenomenon within the broader guild of Old Testament scholarship. What here is labelled an "evangelical" perspective, includes both central names and a plurality of positions in contemporary Old Testament scholarship. Thirdly, I would like to say that the book clearly would have benefited from including certain African perspectives. Most of the topics addressed by the thirteen mostly western contributors have their parallels in the

teaching and studying of the Old Testament in African universities and theological seminaries, and the African academic experience with the Old Testament would here have a lot to share with its non-African counterparts.

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