

Africa: Christian impact? Fate of the unevangelized? Or Problem of evil?

An AJET Editorial

In spite of early civilization and introduction of Christianity in the African continent, it still remains a land of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, starvation, war, and disease. The articles in this journal discuss, in one way or the other, the impact of Christianity, the fate of the unevangelized and the problem of evil.

The first article, "*The history of Christianity in Somalia and East Coast of Kenya*" by Ben I. Aram is an original work. The author's findings indicate that both Judaism and Christianity preceded Islam to the lowland Horn of Africa. However, it disappeared within few decades because its extra-Biblical claims contradicted a culture well adapted to a harsh environment. He calls on researchers to find out the influence of Judaism and Christianity within Somali history. He cites Bowers who earlier noted that "Christian presence in Africa is almost as old as Christianity itself, that Christianity has been an integral feature of the continent's life for nearly two thousand years." His findings also reveal that "Somalis have more often focused on their more recent history than their pre-Islamic era." Their perception of Christianity is that it is the religion of foreigners, whether Ethiopian or European. The obscuring of the core gospel message with unmanageable feasting and food taboos would have created a deep-seated weakness in early Somali Christianity in the face of competition with the apparently more culturally suitable religion of Islam.

"*The Introduction and Beginnings of Christianity in East Africa*" by Watson A. O. Omulokoli discusses the beginnings of Christianity in East Africa as begun by a trio of missionaries: Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt, all German Lutherans who worked under the Church Missionary Society.

The author notes that the three Missionaries were characterized by indomitable sacrificial courage, persistence, perseverance, and forward-looking vision. In the face of the passing of his wife and daughter, Krapf

wrote “how the deaths only signified that the missionary enterprise had now commenced in East Africa, especially since “the victories of the Church are gained by stepping over the graves of her members.” The three missionaries were “filled with the assurance that others of their calling would follow them and they regarded themselves from the first as the pioneers of a continental system.”

The history of the Church in Africa negates the thought that Christianity is a Western phenomenon. In fact the present day missiologists and church historians say that the centers of Christianity have shifted from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern.

“*A Rejoinder to Ferdinando's Rebuttal*” is Christopher Little’s reaction to Ferdinando’s response of his article published in AJET Vol. 21.1 2002 under the title, “*Toward Solving the Problem of the Unevangelised,*” and responded to in the same volume by Keith Ferdinando. The gist of the discussion was the “possibility” of the unevangelised finding Christ through some “special modalities of special revelation.” The two scholars examined the evidence, both Biblical and extra-Biblical and arrived at their interpretations. Little, however, feels that Ferdinando misunderstood him in some way.

In this article, he notes that God is able to use other modalities to communicate special revelation, including saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. He cites cases of people claiming to have known Christ before being contacted by missionaries.

Analysis of African Reflection on evil by Joseph B. O. Okello investigates the problem of evil as understood by the African mind on two levels of perception: the ordinary, non-philosophical mind, and the African philosophical with specific reference to Kwame Gyekye’s thought. The African scholars cite the spirits as the origin or agents evil. Okello, however, cites the Judeo-Christian worldview as the most likely worldview in understanding the problem of evil.