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Controversy in Politics, Ideology, Theology and the Church

This did not start off as an AJET issue dedicated to public addresses on controversial topics, but much of it has ended up that way. Whenever Rev. Timothy Njoya speaks, as he did on *The Church and Politics* at the 2012 conference of the *Africa Society of Evangelical Theology* in Kenya, his comments are likely to provoke strong reactions. Joseph Okello's personal opinion essay, *The Pastors, Politics and People of Kenya*, focuses on a different aspect of politics and the church, but in doing so criticizes pastors who become so heavily involved in politics that they fail as pastors. Two more completely different approaches and conclusions would be hard to find.

Prof. Judith L. Hill's paper, *The New Testament and Political Democracy*, begins by examining democracy in ancient Athens, assesses governance in the NT, and concludes, "the NT does not choose to emphasize one form of earthly government as an ideal". She looks instead to the Kingdom of God in heaven as the only ideal government. Fr. Patrick Nwosu's article, *The Ideal State in Jesus' Ministry and Contemporary Nigeria*, focuses on achieving the ideal state now using the controversial method of liberation theology to interpret Jesus' ministry. His assumptions, exegesis, methodology, and conclusions will provoke reactions. But we might want to agree with him that, "Genuine freedom was spiritual and meant liberation from sin." (p. 127)

Staying in Nigeria with Prof. Tersur Aben's *Is Postmodernism Coherent?*, we encounter some of the controversial positive and negative aspects of postmodernism, though how many AJET readers will agree that the prosperity gospel should land on the positive side of the ledger? Prof. Danny McCain's address, *Pentecostals and Others: Challenging and Learning from Each Other*, presented to the *Theological Educators of Africa Conference* held at TCNN, Bukuru in August 2011, touches as briefly, but less favourably, on Prosperity Theology as one aspect of Pentecostal/Charismatic influence in Africa today. McCain's insightful analysis of how Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals need one another and can learn from one another is less controversial than it might have been some years ago, but my own recent experience in teaching a "mixed" MA in Theology class is only one example of how controversial some of those traditional "controversial issues" can be.

Mark Olander's article, *Creative Teaching Methods in Theological Education*, is a break from controversy, but his challenge to theological educators to move beyond traditional lecturing (only one of the *impressional* teaching methods) to include *expressional* methods (such as dramas, small group discussions, songs, case studies, mime, and many others) creates internal tension for teachers who don't normally think that far "outside the box".

Rounding off this issue are two book reviews that handle the controversial topic of women and the Church in a non-confrontational, but different, way.

The oral nature and speaking styles of the authors of the articles in this issue remain, and their opinions do not necessarily reflect AJET's views.

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The New Testament and Political Democracy¹

by Judith L. Hill

Introduction

The subject of this year's Interdisciplinary Colloquium, The Bible and Political Democracy, is not totally suitable for a New Testament (NT) investigation. After all, the world of the NT did not have any experience with political democracy. Rather, the Roman empire dominated, and the emperors never displayed any democratic tendencies. Although local differences existed in terms of the governing of cities, all the events recorded in the NT took place under the imperial Roman government. And most certainly, the emperor was not elected to his office by a democratic vote of all the empire's residents. Rather, he simply declared himself emperor.

In the NT itself, perhaps the closest one might get to democracy is the selection of the so-called "deacons" in Acts 6. The apostles laid out the criteria for choosing the servants (οἱ διακονοῖ), and the people made their selection from among the qualified candidates. But how, exactly, that selection took place is unknown. Was it the choice of an oligarchy? Or was it all the people? Or was it that only the men could express an opinion, and no women had a choice, even though the issue involved widows? Was the voting done by a show of hands, by secret ballot, perhaps by lots? We simply do not know.

Nevertheless, I will attempt to highlight a few aspects of the subject of political democracy that can be linked to the background of the NT. Since the Greek culture forms the backdrop for much of the NT, I will begin with an historical overview of classical Athenian democracy, using the fourth century B.C. as the standard as much as possible. I will then describe the decline of that democratic experiment and mention to what extent the Roman empire of the first century A.D. was involved with democratic practices.

Moving to the NT, I will make a few general comments about the NT and democracy and then a few more comments that touch more generally on good governance.²

¹ From an address delivered on 2012.01.03 for the annual Interdisciplinary Colloquium at the Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST). In French, the school is Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB) in Bangui, Central African Republic.

² The final chapter ("Epilogue") in Robert Duncan Culver, *Towards a Biblical View of Civil Government* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), has an interesting compilation of the author's ideas about how an evangelical should look at civil government. This book covers much more territory than this short seminar will attempt.

Athenian Democracy in the Fourth Century B.C.

In thinking back to the historical roots of democracy as a political (and philosophical) system, we are automatically forced back to Greece and, more specifically, to Athens, the best attested of the Greek city-states.³

The very word “democracy” comes to us through the Greek language, as a combination of δῆμος (people) and κράτος (power).⁴ Thus, in a correctly functioning democracy, the real power lies in the hands of the voting populace. Democracy is the rule of the people.⁵ And in the case of this presentation, that principle is to be examined in relation to the πόλις, that is, the city-state.

Prior to the coming of a long period of democracy, Athens had known a series of governments, including kings, tyrants, oligarchs, and plutocrats. But when the Athenians had the chance, they opted for democracy as their form of government and stayed with it as long as possible.

I would like to discuss some of the basic elements of democracy in Athens, including its voters and some of its institutions.

The Voters

The most significant term to understand for Athenian democracy is the basic word δῆμος. The word was employed by Athenians in three related ways. First, reaching the age of 18, an Athenian young man who was a full citizen would register for his obligatory military service (2 years). After his

³ The information in this paper concerning Athenian government structures is drawn primarily from two sources, both of which are available on the website www.stoa.org/projects. Christopher W. Blackwell, “Athenian Democracy: A Brief Overview”, and “The Development of Athenian Democracy”. These papers were written in conjunction with Harvard University’s Center for Hellenic Studies (USA). Other sources are noted as appropriate.

⁴ It has been suggested that “people power,” may have been first used in a derogatory sense, by those aristocrats who did not appreciate the masses (οἱ πολλοί) becoming involved in what had essentially been a plutocracy. Cf. Philip Matyszak, *Ancient Athens on 5 Drachmas a Day* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), p. 69:

Demos means ‘the people of the masses,’ and *kratos* means ‘power’ in the most naked sense, so ‘democracy’ is actually a rather negative term with connotations of ‘mob rule.’ A more polite expression would be ‘demarchy’ or ‘rule by the people.’ But many of the contemporary writers on the topic are aristocrats, who take the view that Athenian democracy is akin to the principle of two wolves and a sheep voting on what’s for dinner. They adjust their language accordingly – and the usage will stick.

⁵ Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States, speaking at the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania cemetery during the Civil War, used these terms: “we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.” The key expressions here are all related to “the people,” not to any one person or group, nor to public officials. The government, he underscored, is composed of citizens, is elected by its citizens, and exists to benefit its citizens.

service, he was then pronounced a δῆμος, a full-fledged member of the Athenian society, authorized to vote in the Assembly.

Second, each local area (sector or village) in greater Athens was also designated by the term ὁ δῆμος. There were 139 of these local governments, divided into three districts: the coastal area, the countryside around the city, and the city itself. All the citizens who were δῆμοι (eligible voters) were also placed by the government into one of ten “tribes” constituted by the city. These tribes were artificial and were not at all aligned with lineage. Their function was to mix together the different parts of the city-state of Athens. Thus each tribe would have an equal number of voters from the different districts, so that parity would reign between the districts and the local δῆμοι.⁶

Third, the Assembly of all the voters was called the ἐκκλησία του δήμου, that is, the Assembly of the people. But, by a sort of shorthand, it was also simply called the Δῆμος, the People. In this paper, it will frequently be noted as “the Assembly.”

Thus the word δῆμος applied to the individual voter, then to his local government area, and finally to the assembled group of all the voters.

It is important to note that in Athenian democracy, the voting privilege was limited. It was not given to women (though they could be citizens and attend the sessions of the Δῆμος). Neither was the vote given to slaves, of whom there were many. Nor could foreigners vote, even if their city was ruled by the Athenians as a colony. Furthermore, to be deemed an Athenian citizen, one had to have both parents who were true Athenians, that is, who had had two Athenian parents, not just one. So the voting privilege was rather severely circumscribed. It has been estimated that the Athenian population in the fourth century B.C. was 250,000 persons. Of these, the number of eligible voters was perhaps 30,000, or a bit less than one in eight persons.

One very important point about these voters is that they voted *directly* for their laws; they did not elect a Senate or a parliament. All the voters voted directly on whatever matter came before them. There were no intermediaries or representatives.

The Assembly of the People

Throughout the course of the year, the Assembly of the People met 40 times, usually every 8 to 10 days, on top of Mount Pnyx. There was no

⁶ These tribes were an artificial construction, having nothing at all to do with lineage. This solution was simply a way to make sure that every voting group had equal representation. The tribes became the new “patronym” (last name) of the person, insuring that no one was identified by the name of an aristocratic family. Each tribe was named after one of the mythical heroes of Greece, and a statue for each eponymous hero was set up in the agora.

building up there, so weather was a factor in the times of the meetings. Climbing the hill presented somewhat of a challenge, especially for the aged. And, on Mount Pnyx, the seating space available for the meeting was suitable for only about 6,000 citizens at a time. Nevertheless, every citizen was free to participate whenever desired. In practical terms, however, those who took part in the Assembly were those who lived closest to the city center, where Mount Pnyx was located. It was unlikely that anyone, except for a special occasion or special concern, would travel any great distance to arrive at the Assembly.

According to the Athenians, democracy ought to include the greatest possible number of citizens, and they wanted to hear different points of view. To encourage fuller participation, they conceived of a way to include the poorer citizens by paying a daily wage to everyone who attended. Thus the poor who decided to participate did not lose that day's salary of one drachma.⁷ The democratic ideal thus sought to include all social classes of Athenian male citizens and to make their attendance feasible economically.

Any citizen in good standing could speak at the ἐκκλησιᾶ (Assembly) but, in point of fact, the speakers at the Assembly were generally those who had some rhetorical training or long experience in public speaking. Nevertheless, the opportunity was open to every δῆμος, young or old, rich or poor, from the city, the countryside or the seaside. A citizen would, however, be barred from speaking if he had not respected his responsibilities in the democratic society. Some things that could cause a man to lose this privilege would be: not paying his taxes, showing cowardice in battle, demonstrating a lack of respect for his parents, or having been profligate and losing his inheritance. These guidelines provide us with a picture of some of the core Athenian values in the IVth Century B.C. and of how those values were maintained through having been enshrined in their constitution. Democratic government was seen as a means of safeguarding ethical values.

When debate in the Assembly of the People had finished on a particular issue, the matter was put to a vote, and voting was done openly, by a show of hands. Thus the citizens were required to be brave enough to express their opinions in public. Of course, if a man did not wish to make his position known, he simply avoided going to the Assembly and/or voting.

The Council of 500

As one can imagine, an Assembly of 6,000 or more persons would be rather difficult to manage. Thus, the Athenians established a sort of executive council for the Assembly, and this was called simply "the Council (or, ἡ βουλῆ) of 500," for it had 500 members. That still seems like a large group, but apparently the Athenians were able to make it work effectively. Each of the 10

⁷ The Greek drachma corresponded to the Roman denarius as the amount given for a daily wage.

so-called “tribes” elected 50 members each year; together these individuals made up the 500 necessary members. To be eligible to serve on the βουλή, a man had to be at least 30 years old and to have been screened rigorously by the out-going Council members. They satisfied themselves that the candidate would maintain the established and honorable Athenian traditions, such as caring for the family graves, treating his parents well, paying his taxes, and having completed his military service well. Once the eligible candidates had been identified, the selection was done entirely by lots, to avoid any possible corruption. A man could serve on the Council only twice in his lifetime and never in successive years.

In addition, those who were accepted as members of the Council had to swear to act in accordance with the laws of the land, for the benefit of both individuals and the Assembly as a whole, to discharge faithfully and at the appropriate times the duties they were given, and to be honest in their investigation of the following year’s candidates for office.

Once again, one can take note of the Athenian interest in having solid ethical standards in their government.

The Council functioned on a daily basis and organized the work for the Assembly. The work of the Council of 500 was primarily to review proposals ahead of time and decide whether or not the proposal was a good one to present to the Assembly of the People, that is the Δῆμος. In this way, the Council functioned as a gatekeeper for the flow of information and the enactment of laws.

In order to help the work to go forward, the 500 members were ruled by a President, who was chosen by lot on a daily basis, to avoid any problems of corruption. Since one never knew who the next day’s President of the βουλή would be, it was impossible to influence that person ahead of time. The term limits for the members of the Council of 500 (one day for acting as President; one year for Council membership) also helped to curb any sort of corruption.

The Lawgivers

Athenian laws were engraved on stone and posted in public places. Until a law was available for everyone to read for himself or herself, the law was not considered to be in force. No secret or unpublished laws were allowed.

The process for adding or changing laws was a rather lengthy one but eventually all laws passed through a special group, named “the Lawgivers” (νομοθέται). These were ordinary citizens, about 1,000 of them, recruited to do the necessary work to prepare laws for debate and (if adopted) for publication. The group discussed the various proposals that they received from the citizens or officials and then decided which proposals they would pass on to the next level, that is, to the level of the Council of the 500. The Council would then, in its turn, discuss whether to pass the proposed law or

change of a law on to the Assembly or instead to send it back to the Lawgivers for further preparatory work.

The Courts

The judicial branch of the government was responsible for trying cases. There were two main levels of courts. The first, for cases of arson, physical assault, and homicide, held its meetings on the Areopagus Hill. The judges were retired city executives (οἱ ἄρχοντες), men who had a vigorous reputation for honesty and who took strong oaths of office to act in accordance with the truth. For anyone found guilty by the court, the punishment was death. Nevertheless, if a person anticipated that he or she was to be judged guilty, that person could simply leave Athens quietly and go into voluntary exile before the day when the sentence was to be pronounced. The person's house and belongings would then be sold to the profit of the city.

The second court tried lesser cases and had much larger juries, numbering from 501 to 1,000 members, all of them regular Athenian citizens. As was the case with the Assembly, each participant in a jury was paid a daily wage for his presence.

Other Officials

The Athenians had two sorts of leaders who were elected on a special basis. Each "tribe" elected a General (στρατηγός), who needed to have specialized military knowledge in case of war. The city also elected Treasurers (οἰκονομοί),⁸ and their special qualification was that they had to be rich. The reason for that requirement was that, if any embezzlement occurred, the guilty Treasurer was held responsible for repaying the money in full. The Athenians feared that a poor Treasurer would not be able to reimburse the city.

Lessons from Athens

The Athenian form of government, as a direct democracy, is unlike most democracies today, except perhaps for some minor local governments. Nevertheless, Athenian democracy promoted some very good principles. One of those principles (as limited as this may seem in retrospect) was the equality of its (male) citizens under the law. Every young Athenian male with two Athenian parents could register and be considered a δῆμος. Athens did not include women along with men, and slaves did not count as people, much less as citizens. But at least all male citizens could participate. Furthermore, the Athenians made sure that the voting blocs (the "tribes") were representative of all the different regional interests — coastal, urban, and farmland. Finally, they assured equality, or a semblance of it, in the running of the Assembly. One did not need to be wealthy to be allowed to speak, and all the participants were paid a day's wage for being present.

⁸ Cf. Erastus in Rom. 16.24, the treasurer of Corinth.

Another important point to highlight is that Athens, in establishing the rule of law for their society, always made a written copy of the law available to the public. No law could be enforced unless and until it was publicly posted.⁹

Furthermore, Athens demonstrated that one function of government was to uphold high standards. The laws that governed who could be accepted in the *Δῆμος* were ones that included ethical standards and obedience to the laws of the city. The various requirements for holding office were put in place in such a way as to give little opportunity for corruption through untoward influence or through the embezzlement of funds.

Finally, the Athenian democracy divided its functions. The separation of powers and the checks and balances that were written into their constitution meant that no single individual could become too important, even in a limited area, and no one could take over the entire government. It was truly to be a government of the people, to the full extent of the *Δῆμος*.

Although democracy in Athens in the 4th Century B.C. had limits that are today unacceptable, the Athenian constitution provided a solid foundation on which later democracies could build.

The End of Athenian Democracy

Athenian democracy ended with the conquest of the city by Philip II of Macedon and his son, Alexander the Great. Although Alexander had been tutored by Aristotle, an Athenian who had instilled in his pupil a love for all things Greek, Alexander's love did not extend to adopting democratic institutions. Alexander was first and foremost a king, an insatiable king who went on to conquer an empire for himself. At first, Philip and then Alexander spoke euphemistically in terms of a confederation of Greek states, but it soon became clear that all the authority rested with Alexander himself. At the despot's death in 323 B.C., his generals began to take reprisals against Athenians who had not been enthusiastic about joining the Hellenic Federation. Silence was imposed through fear, and Athenian democracy came to an end. When Athenian freedom of speech was threatened, the Assembly could no longer openly debate the issues and make their own decisions.

Roman Government in the First Century A.D.

In the first century A.D., we find a different form of government in place. Rome had, for some years, been a republic. But Octavian, who wanted to be known as Caesar Augustus,¹⁰ took over power in 27 B.C., calling himself

⁹ Jones, thinking of his own day, goes further. He states that laws, besides being written and available, should be easily understood by the populace. Archie P. Jones, *Christian Principles in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights*, Part II (Marlborough, NH: Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1994), p. 5.

¹⁰ It was as "Octavian" (also known as "Octavius") that he was involved in war and bloodshed. To blot that negative impression from the minds of the people, the emperor

“emperor.” No one in the empire could question his decisions. Although the emperors frequently made a pretense of consulting the Senate, no one really believed that the emperor would follow the Senate’s counsel if it did not agree with his own ideas.

The Roman Senate was a body of men who were elected to represent the people (indirect democracy). Only the very richest of the rich could be elected as Senators. The Senators were primarily concerned with things that were important to the aristocracy of the country, that is, to themselves and their own social class. They demonstrated very little interest in the needs of the common people, that is, of more than 99% of the population.¹¹

Elections for the Senate were held only in the city of Rome itself. Roman citizens in far-flung regions of the empire had no chance to vote unless they returned to Rome. Citizenship by the time of the first century A.D. was a somewhat complex affair. It could be attained by birth to a Roman citizen¹² or be offered as reward or recompense for service (military or other) rendered¹³ or occasionally could be (illegally) purchased.¹⁴ Given the total population residing within the limits of the empire, the percentage of citizens was quite low. And even more miniscule was the number of those citizens who could actually participate in Senatorial debates, regardless of the somewhat meaningless nature of those debates.

Thus, although Rome (and some of the provincial cities) had a veneer of democracy, in fact, there was no viable democracy in the first century A.D.¹⁵

The New Testament and Political Democracy

Thus we come to the NT evidence. As we have just established, no one in the NT experienced democracy for the simple reason that it did not exist. Furthermore, the NT seems not to indicate any interest in democracy.¹⁶

decided to be addressed not by his own name (Octavian) but by his title (Caesar Augustus). “Caesar” was at that point simply a family name (from Julius Caesar), and Augustus had connotations of “revered” or “majestic.” His title as “emperor” derives from the Latin term “*imperator*.” In Greek, the term used for his position is “βασιλευς.”

¹¹ Before the time of Octavian, a second institution existed, to which the slightly less rich could be elected. During the imperial period this assembly no longer had a place in the formal structure of the empire.

¹² Such was the case with the apostle Paul (Acts 22.28).

¹³ Soldiers who had a career of 20-25 years in the army automatically received citizenship at the time of their retirement from active service.

¹⁴ One can note here the example of the centurion in Acts 22.28.

¹⁵ Jerusalem did not even have a shadow of democracy. Its overlord was the legate based in Antioch (Syria) and appointed by Rome. He operated through the Roman governor of Palestine and, to some extent, in cooperation with the Jewish Sanhedrin.

¹⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), p. 3: “The New Testament cannot be used directly as a source for solving

In this section, my aim is to point out some NT elements that have some bearing on the matter at hand. Even if there is nothing that directly addresses the question of forms of government,¹⁷ certain principles can be gleaned. The Bible, after all, is the Christian's sourcebook for ethical guidelines needed for daily living. I will begin by presenting four general observations.

Four Observations

The fact that the Roman empire was not a democracy leads to the (rather obvious) observation that Christianity took root in a non-democratic environment and indeed flourished there. Christianity has had no intrinsic need to go hand-in-hand with political democracy.¹⁸ It is true that democracy, as practiced today in many areas of the world, may give greater freedom for Christian endeavors, but through the centuries Christianity has put down roots in pagan, imperial Rome, as well as in pagan, technocratic Western nations, and in Communist China, Muslim Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.¹⁹ The power of Christ and his Word to transform lives is not limited by any type of government. Indeed, one remembers that Tertullian, the Early Church Father, recalling all that the early Church experienced in a difficult period under the Roman Empire, said: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

My second observation is that everywhere, from cover to cover, the Bible reminds us of the truth that God alone is supreme. He alone is sovereign (cf. 1 Tim. 6.15-16). Any earthly government exists only because God has allowed it

all our contemporary problems. There are some problems – that of the relation of Christianity to culture, for instance – which can only be solved by indirect deduction from what the New Testament says." Culver, *Towards a Biblical View of Civil Government*, p. 281, underscores the same point: "... one will learn very little, indeed, of social or political theory and only a little of economic theory from the Bible."

¹⁷ "... if by democracy we mean 'government of the people by the people and for the people,' in the form of majority rule by the ballot, then the Bible knows nothing of it." Millar Burrows, "Democracy in the Hebrew-Christian Tradition: Old and New Testaments," in Lyman Bryson and Louis Finklestein (eds.), *Science, Philosophy and Religion: Second Symposium* (NY: Conference Science, Philosophy and Religion in the Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, 1942), p. 399. Quoted in "The Bible, Judaism and Christianity and the Origins of Democracy: Part 2," weblog published July 6, 2008, by a blogger using the pseudonym : "beastrabban."

<http://beastrabban.wordpress.com/2008/07/06/the-bible-judaism-and-christianity-and-the-origins-of-democracy-part-2/>

¹⁸ "Democracy is separate from Christianity, but linked to it through the fundamental concern of justice and humanity that are common to both, so that Christianity, although it has supported tyrants, is also, and continues to be a vital source of support for democracy itself." These comments appear in "The Bible, Judaism and Christianity and the Origins of Democracy", weblog: "beastrabban", <http://beastrabban.wordpress.com>

¹⁹ "... the Bible endorses neither monarchy nor democratic republic, though it repeatedly proclaims, in a variety of ways, that magistrates of civil government have their power given them by God Himself." Culver, p. 282.

to exist. The Roman emperor, though he had control of a large land mass and population, was still far inferior to God himself and ruled only because God allowed him to do so (cf. Jn. 19.11).

The third observation is that every Christian lives simultaneously in two worlds: the here-and-now and the world to come.²⁰ The “already” is marked by human governments, but the Christian’s true citizenship is in heaven. Although we are not yet living in heaven, the realities of the future life penetrate the Christian’s daily existence. He or she is not limited to the visible world and its governments – whether local, national, or international. Human government is limited and temporary, whereas heavenly citizenship is eternal. Although the institution of government in the present world can provide stability rather than chaos or anarchy (cf. 1 Tim. 2.1-4; Rom. 13.1-5), the role of any human government is necessarily limited.²¹ Furthermore, the Christian’s loyalty – if put to the test – must go first and foremost to God himself rather than to an earthly government. Such was the reaction, for example, of Peter and John, who said in effect: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 4.18-20).

Related to that observation about eternal citizenship is a final general observation: Heaven will not be democratic. There, all heavenly citizens will be under the supreme authority of God and will trust him explicitly and implicitly for every good thing, for all of eternity. Whereas democracy has been useful in many centuries and many regions of the world, it is not a concept that will endure beyond this life. Our lives in heaven will have nothing to do with elections and politics. We will gladly live under the model of the benevolent king or emperor (βασιλευς). Only, in heaven, there will be no sin to sidetrack good plans and intentions, as so often happens to rulers and politicians here below.²² God cannot sin, and in heaven we as believers will be liberated not only from the penalty of sin but also from its very presence and power.

Equality Before the Creator

Although the NT does not speak directly of democracy,²³ some of the NT principles are ones that can inform democracy and strengthen it.²⁴

²⁰ Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), highlights the influence of this dualism in the relationship of the Christian to the State. Cf. Ia “Conclusion,” p. 86-92.

²¹ Jones, p. 3, points out the principle that, whereas God has ordained civil government, the government itself is not divine.

²² Cullman, p. 4-5, states that, because of the Christian’s view of heaven as his/her true πολιτευμα, “the State appears as something ‘provisional.’ For this reason we do not find anywhere in the New Testament a renunciation of the State as a matter of principle; but neither do we find an uncritical acceptance – as if the State itself were something final, definitive.”

²³ Although many congregational-based churches today tend to take Paul’s list of qualifications for elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1) as indicative that these

The first principle is that of human equality before God. This equality comes in two dimensions. First of all, it indicates that men and women both are God's creation (cf. Mk. 10.6, echoing Gen. 1.27; 5.2). Applied to democracy, that principle should give voting rights to both sexes.²⁵ Thus, in an open democracy (which is currently practiced in some, but not all, democracies), every citizen should be able to vote.

The second dimension of this human equality before God is underlined in the NT in Rom. 3.23: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every citizen is also a sinner and can be tempted toward evil actions. Because of that reality, the possibility of sin, in any form, is always present. When committed by persons in positions of authority, these sins are betrayals of the public trust. The consequence of this sad reality is that democratic governments must, of necessity, establish safeguards such as term limits, separation of powers, and checks and balances. These laws limit the possibility of a person causing great damage to the government. Neither a person nor even an oligarchy would be able to take over the government for their own ends and power, enticing as they might find that temptation.²⁶

positions should then be elected on a congregation-wide basis, it is not clear from Scripture that that was the practice in the first century A.D.

²⁴ In the 1940s, Alfred Outler, a Christian ethicist, wrote, "I do not see how a democratic order can be achieved or remain uncorrupted without a religious undergirding..." Alfred Outler, "The Patristic Christian Ethos and Democracy," in Bryson and Finkelstein (eds.), *Science, Philosophy and Religion*, p. 470, cited by a blogger "beastrabban," in his July 6, 2008, weblog entitled: "Judaism, Christianity, and the Origins of Democracy: Part I." The document, with other comments from Outler, can be viewed at <http://beastrabban.wordpress.com/2008/07/06/judaism-christianity-and-the-origins-of-democracy-part-1/>

²⁵ The apostle Paul extrapolates this idea further to note that neither should there be artificial barriers of social class, race, or educational level (Gal. 3.28; Col. 3.11).

²⁶ In the following quotation, Tokunboh Adeyemo has expressed similar ideas. The quotation comes from his article, "Religion and Government in Africa", in Delanyo Adadevoh (ed.), *Religion and Government in Africa: A Christian Response* (Miami: ILF Publications, 2009), p. 54-55.

Normally, a State is a civil authority or government that exercises delegated power to enforce laws to restrain the wicked, protect the weak and promote uprightness, equity, justice and welfare of the society. The word "normally" is used in the definition, as there are abnormal cases of military dictatorships or tyrants presiding over the affairs of a State.

"Civil" here means discipline, which implies an approved, participatory process of governing such as in a democratic government. "Delegated" implies that the power and authority to govern has been delegated by the people being represented in a legislative assembly. However, God, to whom every leader or ruler is accountable, ultimately delegates all power and authority.

Therefore, civil authority is God's merciful provision for fallen human society. Due to the fallen nature of man, there is always the temptation in exercising this authority, to

Six Principles for Good Governance

The following New Testament principles concern government in general but can also be applied to the democratic system. I do not plan to develop them but simply will briefly note that many of the good points for governance can be traced back to biblical principles.

1. God wants governments to exist, rather than having anarchy or chaos. Both Paul (Rom. 13.1-4) and Peter (1 Pet. 2.13-14) explain that governments are instituted, ultimately, not by human effort but by God's sovereign design for human beings here on earth.

2. The fundamental attitude of a Christian is to honor and obey the government and to pray for its leaders (1 Tim. 2.1-2). As we will see, this attitude may have limits, but it is the assumed posture. As Jesus demonstrated and taught,²⁷ and as Paul taught, obedience includes supporting the government through the taxes it imposes (Mt. 17.24-27; Rom. 13.7).

3. Disobedience to government regulations can be legitimate when the government attempts to impose something contrary to God's laws.²⁸ Biblical principles transcend earthly strictures (Acts 4.18-20). In a democratic society, it must be noted, there are generally means for addressing these problems and having laws repealed.

4. Civil disobedience must be limited to the specific act that pits the Christian against a government regulation and then be followed by submission to the right of the government to punish those whom it considers wrongdoers. The examples of Jesus, of Peter and John, and of Paul, each of whom experienced arrest, show that they did not attempt to destroy the government or its authority. They did not cause destruction or loss of life or seek anarchic solutions.²⁹ They submitted to the punishment that was normal for someone

abuse power. The three-tier system of government consisting of the Legislature (politicians), Judiciary (learned interpreters), and Executive (implementers) evolved to maintain checks and balances in government.

²⁷ According to Cullmann's analysis, Jesus "does not regard the State as in any sense a *final*, divine institution; on the other hand, we see that he accepts the State and radically renounces every attempt to overthrow it." Cullman, *The State in the NT*, p. 18. The examples Cullmann adduces are Jesus' responses in the temptation narrative of Luke 4 and the issue of paying taxes in Mark 12.

²⁸ Cullmann, *The State in the NT*, p. 37, lived through the era of Nazi Germany and on into the era of the Russian Communist threat, has strong boundary lines for what is and is not proper for a government: "... the State is nothing final. On the other hand, it has the right to demand what is necessary for its existence - but no more. Every totalitarian claim of the State is thereby disallowed.... if ever the State demands what belongs to God, if ever it hinders you in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, then resist it."

²⁹ Cullmann, basing his thinking on Rom. 13.7, states that, whereas Christians must resist the demands of a totalitarian State for worship (such as was true in the time of

who had broken a law, even when the government's estimation of their law-breaking was faulty.

5. A good government seeks the common good, the welfare of all the people under its care, and equal justice for all its citizens. Good leaders, whether in government or elsewhere, exhibit the attitude of serving others rather than one of self-aggrandizement (Luke 22.25-26). Service to others is included in the idea of seeking the common good.

6. Governments are called to punish evildoers and promote goodness (Rom. 13.3-4; 1 Pet. 2.13-14). Both the positive and the negative responsibilities should be stressed.

These few principles (and one could, of course, enumerate several others) describing the Christian's relationship to government authority provide a basic idea of what the NT has to say and the principles that would undergird any good and healthy government, democratic or other.

Conclusion

Democracy comes in all shapes and sizes and has been the aspiration of many people over the centuries. Democracy is not ideal as a system, for no earthly system can attain perfection. But here below, in our current era, democracy, when and where it conforms to principles that the Bible affirms – even when it does not pretend to have the Bible as its source – can be very attractive. Political democracy gives the most freedom to the greatest number of individuals, while still holding each one accountable before the laws of the land, whether as private citizens or as public officials.

Yet, only when believers arrive in heaven will they experience the perfect government: the Kingdom where God alone reigns, a Kingdom from which all sin has been banished forever. We look expectantly for this sovereign and universal reign by the all-powerful King of Kings.

The Bible provides basic principles for good governance, many of which are reflected in political democracy. Nevertheless, the NT does not choose to emphasize one form of earthly government as an ideal. Only when we reach our eternal home in heaven will we experience the ideal government – a kingdom ruled by God alone and totally exempt from any and every kind of sin – the home of those redeemed through Jesus' sacrificial death, his resurrection, and his final ascension to glory.

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Church and Politics:

With Aspects Relating to Governance, Public Policy and Ethnicity¹

by Timothy M. Njoya

Introduction

Let me first define the Church as an assembly of believers dependent upon the help of the Holy Spirit, and where the Gospel is duly proclaimed, (Acts 9:31). Christianity adopted the term “church” from the pagan and Jewish worlds where the word meant temple (Acts 19:37-39) or assembly of citizens gathered for a common purpose. A political meeting was also called a church. The need then arose to distinguish the Christian Church gatherings in Christ's name and where the resurrected Christ is exalted from any other kind of assembly. Therefore, the Church defined itself as the Church of God, which he purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28, I Corinthians 1:2 and 12:27).

Today's meaning of the word Church is no longer Biblical. It is social, just like business corporations and political states. The only difference is that the Church practices religion and its main actors call themselves reverends, bishops, apostles, pastors, evangelists and other grandiose names. In Kenya, the religious values of the Church and the political values of the state are those of the market: material blessings and power relationships at the expense of the poor and powerless.

Covenant

The Biblical course of events that determined the development and differentiation of the Church and state are recorded in the book of Samuel. Prior to Samuel, the Church (House of Israel) was governed by certain values codified in God's covenant with Abraham and the Ten Commandments. Since the time of Moses, the Church was a nation led by the civil society without the state. It was the people of Israel, the Church itself, that agitated for Samuel, the main civil society actor, to appoint a king for them. Instead of continuing to be governed by the system of beliefs and values called the holy covenant, the Israelites wanted to also be ruled by means of law and force like other nations around them. God succumbed to their pressure and allowed Samuel to appoint Saul as their first head of the Government. Quite reluctantly, Samuel presided over the transition of Israel from a civil society to a society split into civil society and the monarchy (I Samuel 1-12). The failure of Saul and the subsequent kings to adhere to the ideology of God's covenant with Israel (I Samuel 15:1-31) led to the conflict between the kings and prophets.

The dichotomies and conflicts started to emerge between the Church whose authority was based on beliefs and values, and the State, whose

¹ Presented at the 2012 Conference of the Africa Society of Evangelical Theology on 28th April 2012.

authority was based on law and force. While the Church did not relinquish to the state its moral authority on enforcing observance of the covenant, it obeyed the king's commands if they were consistent with the word of God.

Samuel also did not relinquish his religious role of ensuring that the monarchy observed the holy covenant between God and Israel. Moses had divided the Covenant into two parts: the first defined the relationship between God and Israel, and the second part, containing the last six commandments, defined the moral obligations of the Israelites to one another. This latter part required Israel to relate with each other in the same degree of fidelity and care as they related with God. Thus, after their liberation, God required the Israelites to not treat each other as badly as they had been treated by their Egyptian masters. The people of Israel were given the Promised Land as tenants at God's will and on condition that they obeyed the covenant as their national constitution. Jesus recognized this contribution of Moses by summing up the first four commandments as kinship with God and the other six as kinship with one another.

The first part of the constitution obliged God to accept worship and service from the Israelites, while in the second part, God was to bless the Israelites if they worshiped him sincerely by obeying all the commandments. God's blessings included great posterity and great prosperity in terms of milk and honey as well as peace within their borders. Sometimes the Israelites found it easier to worship and serve God as an excuse not to serve one another. God got so tired of this dichotomy between worship and concern for one another and said, "Do you think I want all these sacrifices you keep offering to me? I have more than enough of the sheep you burn as sacrifice and of the fat of your fine animals (Is. 1:11) ... When you lift your hands in prayer, I will not look at you. No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood. Stop all this evil that I see you doing (1:15) and learn to do right. See that justice is done - help those who are oppressed, give orphans their rights and defend the widows" (1:17). The Israelite leaders hoped that by bribing God with worship and sacrifices, God would bless them with more riches. And those riches would eventually reach the widows, orphans and the oppressed through the trickle down effect, by ethnic osmosis or by proxy. The Church and the State had thus converged and had lost their essential distinctions. The Church had become a function of the State.

Regardless of how one evaluates the religious-political history of Israel from Samuel through the 7th to 6th centuries B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era, it is evident that the alliance of religious and political leadership failed to meet the standards of God's covenant which is the ultimate law of divine-human governance.

After the end of the Israel northern monarchy in 721 BC and Jewish monarchy in 586 BC, God's covenant with Israel did not die. Instead it became universal. Instead of reading the failure of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah as

the failure of God's reign on earth, the prophets expanded the lists of God's servants to the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Ptolemies of Egypt. Indeed, the prophetic tradition welcomed Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor, as God's instrument for punishing the errant dictators and considered King Cyrus of Persia as God's instrument for the liberation of the Jews. Cyrus appointed Nehemiah to revive the Jewish religious institutions that were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar but not the political establishment.

The forcible support of Hellenism by Antiochus IV 175-164 BC and conquest by Roman in 63 BC did not end the political influence of the priestly hierarchy centered at the temple in Jerusalem and development of synagogues throughout the Hellenistic empire. The Jewish ethnic and political need for survival during the Greek and Roman empires continued to the time of Jesus. The Sanhedrin acted as the political bridge between Roman power and Jewish community. The Romans appointed such leaders as Herod and Pilate to rule the Jews through a system of Dual Mandate within which the Sanhedrin imposed the Jewish Mosaic law (Torah) and had its own temple currency. Jesus considered this practice of dual currency as flawed and corrupt and played a prophetic role by whipping the money-changers.

The Audacity to Hope

But the Church is likely to meet obstacles from the State if it dares proclaim people's God-bestowed humanity, sovereignty, freedom and dignity. Both the Church and the State opposed me when I pegged my theology on the books of Habakkuk and Isaiah and preached for the transformation of Kenyans from property into humans and their nation from market into humane entity. My prophecy had arisen as a spiritual revolt within the rank and file of the Kenyan ruling class which constitutes 10% of the population. In the name of academic merit and elections, this class consumes 90% of Kenya's wealth. My point was not that educated Kenyans should not eat and mate more than their fellow Kenyans, but that the Kenyan elites consumed more than they produced.

I also pointed out that the Kenyan education produces consumers rather than producers resulting in parasites who make up the religious and political leadership. The majority of Kenyan youth who pass their exams with less than Grade C- toil picking flowers, tea and coffee and milking cows. They collect sand and quarry stones, shine shoes, cook and clean toilets for those who passed their exams with As, Bs and C+s but who produce virtually nothing.

The immediate result of this education system that rewarded passing examinations rather than rewarding production, was a top elite characterized by excessive consumption of fashionable clothes, cars, cosmetics, houses and posh private schools, coupled with high hospital bills for obesity, stress and related lifestyle diseases. However, Prof. Ng'eno, the then Minister for Education, avoided addressing this critique of the Kenyan success narratives

and instead defended the quota system by attacking me as one who “is not trained in matters of education and should stop using the pulpit to pontificate to this country on what should be done” (*The Standard*, January 18, 1987). Prof. Ng'eno missed my point that the Church and State should stop processing children like robotic products for sale into the job market. Children have rights to realize their God-given potential as good citizens regardless of their intellectual capacity.

When I called for the Lancaster constitution and the One-party state to be dismantled, the Minister of Livestock Development, Mr. Elijah Mwangale, said that Church leaders who attack the government for no reason should not be tolerated, and called for my arrest and subsequent detention. He warned: “Let me remind Njoya that the late Honorable Jean Marie Seroney and Martin Shikuku were both plucked out of inside Parliament in the '70s and taken to detention when the government felt that that could be the best way to safeguard the country's security and interests” (*Daily Nation*, January 8, 1990).

Clearly the State's expectation was that the Church should complement it rather than play its God-given role. In response to my sermon of July 7, 1984, Parliament was told that “the right to worship cannot be exercised in isolation and must be complimentary to the government policies and aspirations in the interests of law and order.” My preaching was characterized as having gone “beyond the limits and interfered with certain government action,” and as “not in keeping with the spirit of peace, love and unity” (*Daily Nation*, July 20, 1984, p. 1).

Some Kenyans attended my rallies because they wanted to defy the threats issued by the state, others to hear the message of liberation, others simply to be godly, while others came to identify themselves with someone different from a tribe, state or party. This spiritual phenomenon of driving people away from traditional loyalty to the State to loyalty to ideas affected even Moi himself. While Moi declared that it was not his duty to dictate what should be preached (*The Standard*, July 26, 1984), he wanted preaching to be done within certain parameters. He therefore said, “Christians who are claiming they are praying for others should go to their rooms and pray.”

The Imperial Church of the Market

Christianity of the market began in East Africa in 1498 when Vasco Da Gama arrived in Malindi accompanied by Roman Catholic Missionaries.² In 1567 the Portuguese Viceroy in India ordered the Gospel to be preached around Mombasa. An Augustinian monastery was built on the East African Coast of the Indian Ocean. By 1597, there were 600 African Christian slaves, Swahili and Bantu. The Church was part and parcel of the ideology that

² David B. Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook: The Development of Kenyan Christianity, 1498-1973*; Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1973, p. 29.

pacified slaves with prayers and songs during the time of the Atlantic slave trade triangle. John Newton (1725-1807), who became one of the most prosperous English slave traffickers from Africa across the Atlantic, composed such songs as *Amazing Grace*, *Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken*, and *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds* to console himself and the slaves as he buried a third of his human cargo into the sea because it could not make it to America due to heat strokes, suffocation, hunger and contagious diseases.

The industrial revolution also transformed every religious institution in Europe into an organ of the market. The values of the market, its stability, continuity and profitability overrode every other form of human value. Humanity was no longer defined by God's image but by consumption. The more knowledge, material goods and services one consumed, the more human one became. Similarly, the lesser the knowledge, material goods and services one consumed the less human one became.

It was at the peak of the Industrial revolution that Africa was incorporated to become part of the European overseas market with its ideology of survival of the fittest. This incorporation did not end with independence; instead, Kenya remained entrenched in Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and Herbert Spencer's theory of the survival for the fittest, both concepts of which are derived from the animal kingdom where the big fish eat small fish. Julius Nyerere used a similar animal metaphor in his assessment of Kenya, referring to our country as a "man eat man society". Despite their different perspectives, Darwin, Spencer and Nyerere were united in using the animal kingdom as a metaphor for describing a capitalist society. However, they were too generous: African totalitarianism is less natural than the animal kingdom. In the case of animals, the big fish are intelligent enough to eat small fish without interfering with their breeding cycle in case they miss future supplies. By contrast, the ruling classes assassinated their most intelligent, industrious and creative thinkers and in so doing destroyed their fitness to survive in the western market environment.

It was this suicidal class that I was trying to save from itself when, in 1986, I called on Kenyans to dismantle the Lancaster constitution and the One-party state. I joined prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Micah and Hosea in exposing religion and politics as Kenyan elite self-reward systems. As mentioned above, I spoke out against the injustice of the fact that 10% of the population consume 90% of Kenya's wealth while the less educated serve them. The perspectives of Isaiah and Jesus had inspired me to critique the compromise of the church with the State in oppressing Kenyans.

Similarly, the Harambee ideology in Kenya is the ideology of the ruling class to deceive the masses that they need not eat and mate because their tribal figures would eat and mate on their behalf. This logic is commonly expressed in the argument that if the tribal leaders become rich, their followers become rich by proxy and osmosis. The religion of Israel had also carried out

the same deception of the poor, proposing that a few royal Israelites becoming rich meant that all Israelites became rich.

But the Kenyan ecclesiastical leadership joined forces with the Government to resist my call for dismantling the One-party totalitarianism because it was part and parcel of the same market. With reckless self-abandon, Church leaders defended the unholy unity of the Church-State identities which I questioned. At an annual general meeting of the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya (FGCK), for instance, leaders reaffirmed “their total support and confidence in president Daniel arap Moi’s leadership, the government and the ruling party, KANU” and declared that “since its foundation in 1949, the Full Gospel Churches in Kenya had remained faithful and loyal to the government and would continue to do so” (*Kenya Times*, August 25, 2006).

The FGCK was trying to have its cake and eat it; that is, believe in God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and at the same believe in President Daniel arap Moi’s leadership, the government and the ruling party, Kanu; or in the Trinitarian philosophy of Nyayo - Peace, Love and Unity “as expounded by the president.” Yet the KANU trinities and the Holy Trinity were mutually exclusive and diametrically incompatible, just as light and darkness or Jesus and Satan. This unholy trinity revealed African Christianity as more pagan and heathen than Christian. Because the Christianity as propagated by the missionaries during the slave trade and colonialism was not self-critical, it was incapable of preventing Church leaders like Rev Simon Kariuki from straying from the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Sprit to the self-revealed One-party manufactured trinities of Moi’s leadership, the government and KANU, and of the trinity of Peace, Love and Unity.

Instead of attacking the Church or replying to the FGCK, I had to attack the very foundations of the African Christianity; namely the market, as codified by the Lancaster constitution and the One-party state. The Church and the One-party state lived together in a *come-we-stay* marriage. Church leaders capitalized on this un-divinely recognized marriage to sell their followers as voters to politicians or to make them their own voters. The Starehe MP, Margaret Wanjiru, is a typical case in point that believers can be traded for votes to gain wealth and power.

Africa was also plagued by lack of clarity between spirituality and politics. Archbishop Raphael Ndingi Mwana-a-Nzeki defines both Church and state as groups organized for a common cause - the Church to serve the spiritual needs and State the material needs. Ndingi says that, “Here in Kenya we stand in a very good position as far as the Church-State relationships and cooperation are concerned. This cooperation is in accordance with the African

traditional motto Harambee (Let us pull together).” Ndingi believed that the Government “guaranteed freedom of worship and religion in our constitution.”³

While Ndingi believed in the legitimacy of the Lancaster constitution and called it “our” and “ours” I wanted Kenya to have a new constitution that recognized the freedom of worship as something inherent in human beings and which existed before the existence of governments. I could not accept that any Kenyan owed his feet to walk, mouth to talk, hands to greet and **freedom to worship** from the Government. As I have already mentioned, the government was created by the market rather than by the people, and therefore it lacked valid authority to grant freedom to Kenyans. This is why I led the people to the streets to demand a new and legitimate constitution.

By contrast, the prevailing assumption of the Kenyan Church that Ndingi articulated was that sovereignty belonged to the State and the people were subjects. Yet in the New Testament, the State is God-given for the limited purpose of keeping order. The State is a tool of governance and management of public resources. It is not the source of order, peace and resource. These come from God. Ndingi also said, “A further proof of this Church-state relationship is the fact that today in our freely and democratically elected Parliament there is one Member who is also a church minister, something that is rare indeed, even in developed countries.”⁴ The MP that Ndingi referred to was Bishop Lawi Imathiu, the Methodist Church Minister who is now the chairman of the GEMA, an ethnic outfit.

The Unchristian Nature of the State Under the Lancaster Constitution

Since 1888 when Queen Victoria signed the charter that Kenya was part of her British overseas market, Kenya had never become a nation, nor governed as a nation. Therefore, instead of being governed, Kenya had always been dominated and abused. Kenyans do not have any experience of the rule of law but only the rule of force.

Rather than revoke the idea that the Kenyan people were overseas property, the Lancaster constitution reaffirmed people as property, laborers, taxpayers and voters and for the good of the market. The abolition of slavery and colonialism changed the collective and legalized ownership of local people by foreign people into the individual ownership of local people by local people (*sisi kwa sisi*). While during slavery people were free labor, during colonialism they were both cheap labor and taxes, while after independence they became cheap labor, taxes and votes.

Even as Britain wrote the Lancaster constitution, it did not respect the African delegates whom it had invited to the Lancaster Constitutional Conferences. It did not ask the delegates to test the legitimacy of the

³ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 44, 45.

⁴ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, p. 45.

document through a referendum. Instead, Britain superimposed independence upon Kenyans in utter contempt of the universal doctrine of self-determination enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles.

This sabotage made African independence a blatant violation of God-given freedom, sovereignty and dignity of African people. Had Kenyans won their independence in a transformative way as the Americans won their independence, that is, on the battlefield, Kenyans would have had an opportunity to express themselves as the human beings that God created in his own image. Kenya is still lacking an informed spiritual analysis of what is to be human or property and for what reasons they can do with God and without a State. A country like Somalia decided to do with God and without the state.

Lest I be accused of being an anarchist, I refer to my going to a constitutional court (Njoya & Others -versus- Attorney-General, case No. 2004/1/ LR, 261) to argue that the state is a creature of the people, and as their creature, is subject to the authority of the people to unmake it and make another one if they so wished. The constitutional court ruled that WE THE PEOPLE of Kenya have inherent and inalienable God-given sovereignty, which we have the authority to exercise as follows:

1. The power and the right of overhauling the Constitution belongs to or is of the Kenyans and they are the ones who should say, through a referendum, what basic changes are to be effected in the current Constitution.
2. The Parliament has, under the current Constitution, only the power to make amendments to it without altering its basic structure.
3. The National Conference that drafted the Bomas document was fundamentally flawed and lacked the mandate.

The court's decision affirmed the Biblical theology that Kenyans are superior to and come before the State. I left the issue of whether believers are more important than their Churches to be decided by the believers themselves, but developed a theory of transformation as my contribution to the development of our philosophy of Kenyan jurisprudence. Without a new philosophy of jurisprudence, Kenyans would not have had a constitution that recognized God and the humanity of Kenyans. The greatest achievement of my Christian faith and theology is not that Kenyans have made a new constitution, but the fact that I convinced the court that God made each and every Kenyan *human, sovereign and equal*.

This landmark ruling confirmed that my theology has helped Kenya to become one of the most advanced constitutions on the planet. Kenya will however need another or other revolutionary theologians to conceptualize the level of the continuing transformation of Kenyans from property into humans and Kenya from a market into a nation.

The State as God's Stewards (Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:15)

A transformed Kenya would look like a necklace with so many intricate varieties, sizes and colors of beads, with medium size indigo beads like *Digo* and *Pokot*, with petite gold beads like *Indians* and *Ogiek*, with large and crystal beads like *Luhya* and *Somali*, and with delicate oversize beads like *Kikuyu*, *Kalenjin* and *Luo*. To crown it all, as a necklace Kenya would have some expressive beads like *Christians*, spices like *Hindus* and others levelheaded like *Muslims*. The Lancaster constitution could not withstand the weight of all these kinds of beads, and so it had snapped and spilled the beads to the ground where the lighter beads got trampled upon and were crushed by the heavier ones. That is how I came up with the idea of a new constitution to thread Kenyans together unbreakably based on values than on identities. I preached that the universe is God's word and body. When I partake in politics it is in God's body that I am partaking. It is in God's governance and public policy that I am participating.

When you introduce ethnicity into this body of God you are introducing a dichotomy for filtering and selecting who should partake and participate in God's body and who should not. The moment you introduce things like ethnicity, gender, race and class, you create conditions for some to be satisfied and others to be dissidents, malcontents and oppositionists. You are erecting biased criteria for some to eat and mate while others do not. Yet God told Peter not to "condemn what God made clean" (Acts 10:11-15).

God is the one who made tribes, and therefore while it is clean to be Kikuyu or Kalenjin, it would be unclean for a Christian to join GEMA or KAMATUSA, because these associations are exclusive, manmade ethnic associations. These cloths of *negative ethnicity* (politics of physical appearance) were cut and sold by the media to any elite who appealed to physical appearances for political support, following the proliferation of the media after KANU was forced to open a democratic space for radio and TV. This development gave the impression that the differences in wealth and poverty amongst the various tribal elites were caused by differences in their tribal complexion. The media did not make different sizes of dresses for *negative ethnicity*, short for the poor and long for the rich. The experts of *negative ethnicity* did not even venture to invent a vaccine for preventing tribes from developing the chromosomes of *negative ethnicity*. Unfortunately, newspaper articles by Makau Mutua and Koigi Wa Wamwere do not improve matters much; either mischievously or innocently, they provide politicians with materials for thinking that their abuse of ethnic identity for political gain has some scientific foundations. The myth of negative ethnicity, or tribalism, reflects a kind of pathological and intellectual decay that informs the Kenyan political parties on how to form alliances and coalitions without whose misadventures Kenya would not have invited the International Criminal Court.

Even during the trials of the genocide in Rwanda, not a single perpetrator called a physiologist to show DNA evidence of negative ethnicity in his body.

Therefore, God did not make any positive or negative ethnicity in Kenya. He made tribes as natural entities, just as he made trees and animals without making them negative and positive. The term negative ethnicity obscures the sin of unequal and broken material relationships. *Negative ethnicity* cannot be found in the DNA of any ethnic community. Only in the brains of greedy politicians can you find *negative ethnicity* as the DNA of power and wealth. On 25th August 1985 I preached a broadcast sermon entitled *What God Has Cleansed You Must Not Call Unclean*, based on Acts 11:1-18. My sermon of April 14, 1995 repeated that,

Nobody in the world should feel guilty because he happened to belong to one race, sex or tribe, but we must distinguish between race and racism, tribe and tribalism and sex and sexism. However, there is tribalism as another name for elitism which is the disease of elites competing with one another for power and business.

Conclusion

The marked significant turning point in Kenya's history was not prompted by politics, but by having good quality Church theology. If the Church wants to make a divine contribution to the governance of this world, it must be informed by the word of God but not by the imperatives of the market. It is possible that since human character is a product of the market environment, and is as much a social construct as is religion, tyranny, fascism, dictatorship and totalitarianism, one must educate children to grow into God-fearing citizens in order to have a better Church.

The divine criteria for governance are the same for the state as for the Church; namely, fidelity in God's covenant of love for the Creator and care for everything that God created. All religious beliefs, values and practices, as well as all state aspects relating to governance, public policy and ethnicity, should be judged by their faithfulness or lack of faithfulness to the divine covenant as God revealed to Moses and verified through God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. But as the prophetic tradition indicates, there shall always be a necessary ideological conflict between the Church and state, given that the state had inbuilt tendencies to own and control the people and act on the basis of self-preservation, while ideally the Church is called by God to act selflessly for the good of all. From the very beginning the Church acknowledged this ideological divergence by inserting in the Apostles' Creed that Jesus was "Crucified under Pontius Pilate". Any Church that ignores the inherent ideological variance between the state mandate to enforce the law and its divine mandate to "To bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim liberty to the captives ... to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people" loses its very purpose of existence. Amen.

The Pastors, Politics and People of Kenya

by Joseph B. O. Okello

Anyone interested in Kenya's recent politics will notice the unprecedented influx of a significant number of clergypersons into the political arena. Whereas some pastors, in 2007, chose to abandon the ministry altogether and run for political office, a select group ran, quite successfully, for political office while remaining in ministry. Needless to say, this sudden interest in politics on the part of the clergy continues to raise relevant questions, both biblical and ethical, among members of their congregations. Even more important is the fact that the boundary between politics and the prophetic voice gets significantly blurred, at least for the masses depending on their pastors for spiritual leadership. The confused member of the congregation fails to know whether the pastor-turned-politician speaks as a politician in his or her sermons, or as a pastor in his or her political rallies. As I will suggest later in this paper, this ambiguity seems to have at least one hidden and indirect danger that Kenya witnessed in its 2007 and 2008 presidential elections. Let me outline this notion below.

Failure to draw distinctions between the preacher's pulpit and the politician's platform cost Kenya's Evangelical Christianity its prophetic voice - a voice it has, hitherto, not recovered fully. Sections of the disgruntled electorate continue to interpret this loss not only as a compromised and diluted core of the Gospel message, but also as an unfortunate admixture, by the evangelical prelates, of the sacred with the secular. These practices, previously considered anathema by the evangelical church leaders, continuously find their way into various houses of worship. I propose this aforementioned thesis as one of the reasons arsonists demonstrated little respect for some Kenyan churches in 2007, setting them ablaze without restraint and consequently burning beyond recognition individuals who sought refuge in them while fleeing ethnic animosity stemming from the disputed results of the electoral process.

I do not argue, however, that we find a direct link between political violence overall and the admixture of church and politics. Indeed, Kenya's political violence seems to find its roots in a deeper spiritual problem, which, following anthropologists, we might call ethno-centrism, a form of egocentrism. Neither am I contending that devout Christians should not participate in Kenya's political process. I think they should do so for the sake of restoring political sanity in Kenya. My contention has a narrower focus: the potential danger we find in the amalgamation of the evangelical preacher's prophetic role with political ambitions. This amalgamation seems to obscure the purpose of the church as a moral and spiritual guide of the society it tries to oversee. In other words, given the rot in Kenya's political process, a pastor claiming to have a divine call from God to that very office of a pastor should stick within

the boundaries of that call, resisting all temptations to step outside those boundaries.

By Kenyan Evangelical Christianity, I refer to the sort of Christianity in Kenya committed to the authority of Scripture, or for that matter, the Judeo-Christian Bible, as overseeing, instructing and directing all matters of faith and conduct for the Christian believer. The prophetic voice, which I will use interchangeably with the prophetic role, refers to the sort of voice relied upon by the electorate to give spiritual guidance in matters of faith and conduct. I note, also, that Scripture seems to distinguish between two kinds of prophecy: foretelling and forth-telling. Roughly speaking, foretelling suggests a predictive element in which the prophet is understood as making utterances descriptive of events God intends to bring about in the future. Forth-telling suggests a prescriptive element in which the prophet, under God's direction, makes utterances intended for the spiritual and moral direction of the community in their immediate context. Proclaiming the Gospel provides a good example of forth-telling.

From a Christian perspective, the prophetic voice, whether foretelling or forth-telling, is needed in any society, and the loss of that voice could have significant implications for the moral direction of a given society. Seemingly, Rev. David Cho assumes this role for the South Korean Church. The South Africans seem to have Bishop Desmond Tutu as their prophetic voice. The United States has relied for decades on Billy Graham as the national pastor of that country.

However, for the Kenyan scene, no prophetic voice seems available. Potential candidates have died, or become irrelevant in some way either through retirement or compromise. Death, of course, is unavoidable. Irrelevance through retirement from active prophetic ministry is, perhaps, unjustifiable without passing on the mantle to an effective protégé in the Mosaic/Joshua model of the Old Testament, or the Paul/Timothy model in the New Testament. Irrelevance through compromise is neither justifiable nor acceptable. The consequence of this sort of irrelevance is what I wish to address throughout this work.

Let me restate the thesis I intend to defend more fully as follows: the failure of Kenya's Evangelical Christianity to draw demarcations between the sacred and the secular reflects a move on the part of the church to open the door for the secularization of the church. How did Kenya's Evangelical community make this move, and how does this secularization play itself out in the life of the Christian community?

The Pastor, The Pulpit and The People

The process began when several members of the clergy decided to run for political office in Kenya's 2007 general elections. Some candidates got lucky enough to win parliamentary seats. Others were not so lucky. Of course,

running for political office on the part of the Christian minister, in and of itself, is not an unbiblical move, and no Kenyan citizen, including the Christian minister, is barred from running for political positions provided the aspirant follows both legal and moral channels. Humanly speaking any member of the clergy could run for just this kind of office without breaking any legal rules.

However, by making the decision to pursue the occupation of a given parliamentary seat, the aspiring member of the clergy profoundly confuses significant sections of the electorate who strongly feel that the pulpit is sacred ground and must, of necessity, be distinguished from the political podium which, by any Kenyan standards, strikes that very section of the electorate as corrupt. In other words, even if the clergy-turned-politician might not be flouting any Biblical rules by running for political office, that very decision becomes a stumbling block to the believer who wishes to see those two roles separated from each other.

Moreover, this confusion afflicts the secular masses perhaps just as profoundly. Even before the arrival of Christianity in pre-independent Kenya, society demonstrated significant respect for any form of spirituality. For example, the society showed deep reverence, possibly fear for sacred sites, whether those sites were shrines or temples, for those sites marked, in the opinion of the society, specific locations where the spiritual world and the physical world coalesced. Those sites were considered holy and ceremonially clean, and adherents of traditional religion were cautioned against desecrating them. The religious leaders, whether chiefs, *laibons* [a ritual leader or diviner in East Africa], or local medicine-folks, took the lead in exercising this caution.

The arrival of Christianity seemed, by default, to contextualize this very sentiment by regarding the pulpit as sacred. This deep reverence for sacred sites remained undiluted, for the most part, throughout postcolonial Kenya, until 2007, when Kenya found itself imploding with ethnic strife, with the result that some Christian churches were set alight by disgruntled arsonists.

Of course we find ourselves wondering why such lack of respect for holy places and, presumably, holy people, violently expressed itself. This lack of respect seems to come from the masses who are confused by the actions of the leaders of those sacred places - that is, the clergy. How did this confusion arise? Seemingly, the clergy used the holy sites as political platforms. If the masses were led to believe that the worship site was holy or *sacred* and was to be kept separate from *the secular*, the people saw that their religious leaders ignored this. This quite likely suggested to the masses that their religious leaders thought that the ground they proclaimed as sacred either lost its sanctity or had never had it in the first place. Consequently, the sanctuaries lost their privileged position as sanctified grounds, and the leaders lost their moral authority as spiritual guides. Any secular activity could quite easily find a home within the walls of the sanctuaries, including burning alive people seeking refuge from their violent assailants.

The Pastor, Political Power and Materialism

I noted earlier that a majority of Kenya's politicians no longer enjoy a respectable reputation as the custodians of the country's policies. Much to the chagrin of the Kenyan citizen, Kenya's members of parliament have, with unfortunate success, awarded themselves exorbitant sums of money as remunerations for their political duties. Since no one, except the lawmakers themselves, decides the level of the politician's earnings, their salaries are extremely high compared not only to the electorate, but also to their counterparts in other regions of the world. Moreover, the lawmakers keep reviewing their salaries several times, basing their actions on what they contend amounts to the insufficiencies of their previous perks. These revisions immediately follow their hesitance to pay their fair share of income taxes expected of them by the government.

Within this context, if any member of the clergy decides to enter the political scene, the electorate will not be blamed for seeing this move as driven by some form of greed for power and materialism. Unless a clergyperson is a leader of some famous mega-church, thereby earning more than the average Kenyan, not many clergypersons get well paid for their ministries. Until the last decade of the 1900s and the first decade of this century, members of the clergy did not have the reputation of earning the sort of solid income one would find in other fields. The arrival of Kenya's televangelists seems to have changed that notion quite remarkably, considering that some of them proclaim what evangelicals call "The Prosperity Gospel."

However, whether one commands a large income or not, members of the clergy running for political office seem unintentionally to give the suspicious masses an impression similar to the one presented by the rest of Kenya's political population, an insatiable desire for power and materialistic gain, with little attention paid to the plight of the impoverished Kenyan. Political power often comes with a sense of egocentrism characteristic of a superhero. Clergy people running for political office must, for these reasons, wrestle constantly with the double temptation to manipulate the masses to do their bidding on the one hand, and on the other, to appear immune to the materialistic tendencies of the political image. This temptation defines a major issue that a person committed to the Biblical call toward humility and simplicity must overcome.

To be sure, the politically ambitious member of the clergy may be able to remain quite unadulterated by the super-heroic pride and materialism bedeviling Kenya's political scene. In addition, running for office in Kenya inevitably requires raising money to pay for the political campaign, even for candidates who are clergypersons. We see this scenario played out quite often in the American political scene, though some aspects of the United States' political climate have their fair share of questionable maneuvers. Candidates for political office in the US, some of them devout Evangelical Christians, raise millions of dollars to fund their political campaigns, while also

living through the political process without intentionally flouting fundamental Biblical principles.

Such a state of affairs, I admit, seems *possible* in the Kenyan scene. I doubt, however, that the state of affairs is *likely*, for a variety of reasons. First, the use of funds for political campaigns in the American scene appears quite different than the use of funds for political campaigns in the Kenyan scene. In the American scene, for example, candidates use their money to travel from state to state to sell their ideas. They also advertise their political ideas through mass media in an attempt to most effectively reach their audience. The Kenyan scene is quite different. To be sure, some funds are allocated toward political commercials in the media. The majority of funds, however, seem dedicated to vote buying.¹ The candidate's intention by this action is to present himself or herself, in most cases falsely, as a generous financial donor who will sustain that generosity long after gaining electoral victory. The candidate is really bribing the electorate to secure their votes.

The unfortunate reality is that this practice is found throughout Kenya's secular arena. Each politician wishes to outdo his or her opponent. Hence, if politician *A* buys votes from the electorate, politician *B* will try to outmaneuver *A*'s vote-buying practice by giving more money to roughly the same pool of beneficiaries that received money from *A*. The immoral nature of this maneuver seems obvious.

This reality leads me to the second reason that it is unlikely that religious leaders can campaign as Christians do in the US. In the American scene, each political candidate must give a detailed account of how he or she spent the funds received during the campaigning period. In the Kenyan scene, money used for vote buying remains unaccounted for. Hence, the political candidate finds the freedom to use his funds as he wishes. As noted already, the ethical nature of vote-buying and failure to account for campaign expenditures seems highly questionable. Moreover, the fact that very few individuals in Kenya bother to question the ethical nature of such practices, or call politicians to account for the use of their campaign funds, encourages the perpetuation of those very practices.

Notice, however, that given this background, the chances that a member of the clergy can preserve his or her reputation throughout the political process seems greatly diminished. Members of the public will likely assume that members of the clergy have compromised their message of integrity. For one thing, if the clergy-turned-politician aims to win, he or she might have to play, not by the rules of the game (if they exist), but by succumbing to the pressure of the political climate, namely: Candidate *A* gave money to members of

¹ Of course one could plausibly argue that the practice of vote-buying presents itself just as realistically in the American scene as in the Kenyan, though in a more sophisticated format.

constituency *X* in order to win that parliamentary seat. If you wish to win that seat, you must, of necessity, give more money to members of *X* than the amount contributed by *A*. The contra-positive of that claim follows, namely: If you fail to give more money to members of *X* than the amount contributed by *A*, you will lose the parliamentary seat for constituency *X*. This state of affairs defines at least one ethical conflict that any member of the clergy aspiring to run for political office could very likely face.

Of course, we could logically envision a possible state of affairs in which the clergy-turned-politician wins a parliamentary seat without stooping to the practice of vote buying. To be sure, this vision is not only possible, but also desirable, as successfully demonstrated in the life of William Wilberforce, the abolitionist. Kenya desperately needs the actualization of such a scenario into some form of tangible reality.

Such a scenario, however, seems a very distant and unlikely possibility, given the nature of political campaigns in Kenya. The more-than-likely possibility amounts to vote-buying. Hence, if the aspiring pastor-cum-politician donates the funds demanded by the electorate, the act in question amounts to vote-buying, a form of bribery and one expressly forbidden by Scripture. If he or she fails to buy the votes, members of the constituency in question could quite likely reject the aspiring member of the clergy, and vote for the opposing candidate who likely would have parted with more money. Assume that the aspiring member of the clergy, in fact, loses his or her bid for the seat in question. This loss will signify a rejection of the religious leader by the electorate, and this rejection could haunt the religious leader in the ecclesiastical arena as well.

I personally know a certain clergyman who confessed to a panel interviewing him for reinstatement into ministry that his decision to join politics remains the most regrettable decision he ever made in his life as a minister, owing to the conflict of loyalties such a decision presented to him and to the compromises that followed. Even after confessing his regret, I noticed that some members of the interviewing panel harbored suspicions about this minister's intentions. When the panel finally reinstated him, a considerable section of the congregation vehemently expressed their disapproval, and demonstrated a lack of confidence in the leadership of the church for reinstating him as a religious leader. This disapproval may or may not have been justified, but it was there nevertheless.

The Pastor, Multiple Parties and Ethnicity

A third reason for the defense of my thesis is that Kenya subscribes to a multiparty system of politics and strong ethnic loyalties. Inevitably many congregations in Kenya, especially those in cities, will have members of different parties worshiping under one roof. Kenya's multiparty system of politics seems divided along ethnic and tribal lines, and although each political

party subscribes to a manifesto that shuns tribalism, the members of those parties struggle to transcend ethnic and tribal biases. Suppose the pastor of a given congregation chooses to run for political office. He or she will have to run under the umbrella of some particular party. Upon announcing his or her intentions, members of rival parties who are also members of his congregation will find themselves at political odds with their own pastor. The oddity could easily trickle down to create ethnic animosity and hatred. Needless to say, congregational unity may be deeply compromised, and the question of confusion among the congregants will inevitably arise.

Political rivalries among the electorate run deep in Kenya for one major reason - most political parties find their identities along ethnic lines. Hence, political rivalries run almost as deep as, if not exactly as deep as, ethnic rivalries. Many ordinary Kenyan citizens still struggle to rise above their ethnic biases. Any pastor declaring his or her intention to run for political office will be forced to demonstrate extreme caution in order to avoid appearing to members of his congregation as an ethno-centric individual. This goal, though possible, still remains extremely difficult to attain on a national level. Moreover, the pastor would find it just as difficult to attain unity within the political microcosm of his or her multiethnic congregation, once the decision to run for political office is made. To maintain the unity of the pastor's congregation, a unity quite fundamental for the effectiveness of prayer and worship, reason seems to demand that the pastor be a neutral voice among the rival political views that come to the house of worship for moral and political guidance, of which he or she, as the pastor, is the leader.

The Pastor and The Ideal Political Atmosphere

Quite possibly the best of all ecclesiastical, moral, and political worlds would be that a member of the clergy was able to run for political office without losing his or her prophetic voice as a minister. In such a scenario, the entire electorate (including the parishioners) would demonstrate the sort of spiritual, moral and political maturity that places confidence in the religious leader's ability to lead people with remarkable success. In such a world, the electorate understands that politics need not be conducted in an immoral and illegitimate manner, and that the pastor can still play a political role while retaining his pastoral integrity. In such a world the politicians see themselves as servants of the people in which the needs of the country find themselves selflessly prioritized over the selfish wants of the politician in a manner significantly distanced from all forms of corruption; and the politicians also express their concern for the moral, spiritual and social wellbeing of their constituents in a manner consistent with the pastor's concern. The electorate therefore expresses little to no hesitation in allowing the pastor to be its moral guide, on the one hand, and political servant on the other.

The Biblical example of King David comes to mind, wherein we find some stages of David's life spiritually in tune with God and also in touch with the

needs of his people. At those times, David's people seemed to have little or no qualms about seeing David as their spiritual example as well as their political leader, though the prophetic voice remained confined to the individuals specifically designated for the task. David could just as easily walk to the house of worship and lead the nation of Israel in prayer, as he could sit on his kingly throne and execute his kingly responsibilities. In spite of David's apparent successes, he still failed in certain respects, such as in his adultery with Bathsheba. Just the same, David's leadership came fairly close to the ideal I am trying to adumbrate here.

Unfortunately, the political landscape in Kenya lags far and woefully behind this ideal, assuming the Davidic model is an ideal. I doubt that any country this side of heaven demonstrates the ideal in question. On the contrary, a majority of Kenya's politicians view each other with considerable degrees of suspicion, as evidenced by the many instances of mudslinging, vitriolic language and hate speech coming from their campaigns. Moreover, we find the electorate as guilty as the politicians on this very issue of suspicion. Even more sadly, various sections of Kenya's clergy participated in the ethnic hatred that morphed into ethnic cleansing in that dark period of Kenya's history. This sort of participation invited deadly violence into the church in which, as already noted, certain sections of the electorate were not afraid to burn their political opponents alive inside a house of worship.

Conclusion

The upshot of this discussion is that the pulpit should be kept separate from the political platform. Moreover, in order to avoid confusing members of the congregation about the pastoral call, the pastor does his members a very big favor by refusing to jump onto any political bandwagon, and by staying focused on and remaining committed to the ministerial call God placed upon him. A regular worship service should not be turned into a political meeting, and a pastor would be well advised to abstain from running for political office. Dragging political bias into a worship service shifts the focus from God to human personalities. Running after political office in the Kenyan political environment dilutes the purity of the pastor's prophetic call.

This does not imply that the pastor ought not to applaud wise political moves or criticize immoral political decisions. The pastor seems divinely mandated to execute the responsibilities of his call in this regard. Political leaders that seem bent on bringing down a nation and its people must be boldly confronted and cautioned in love, gentleness, respect and humility. In other words, the pastor should provide constructive criticism of the political process without employing the political gimmicks characteristic of the Kenyan situation. In this way, he or she will not only represent a neutral position as far as the politics of Kenya is concerned, but also a position that rises above the political situation, one that reclaims the lost prophetic voice of the nation.

The Ideal State in Jesus' Ministry and Contemporary Nigeria

by Patrick U. Nwosu

Abstract:

The issues that led to the execution of Jesus of Nazareth revolved around political, social, economic and religious ideals. He wanted his people to be liberated from unjust structures, whether from within or from outside. In the light of this understanding, the paper seeks to draw a link between the socio-political atmosphere of Jesus' time and 21st century Nigeria. The argument advanced is that the solutions that Jesus recommended for a better Israel will effectively suit present day Nigerian society. It seems obvious that the present political, social, economic and religious ills of Nigeria are similar to those of Jesus' time despite the time gap. What link has Jesus of Nazareth with Nigeria? What does his teaching on the ideal state portend for 21st century Nigeria? The paper explores these important concerns, using historical and analytical methods. The paper concludes with suggestions for a better Nigeria.

Introduction

Clearly Jesus of Nazareth was arrested, sentenced and executed by the Roman authorities on a charge of political treason. Jesus was found guilty of being involved in some sort of conspiracy; he challenged the status quo of the time. Luke's gospel leaves no one in doubt about the charge that was brought against Jesus. *And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king"* (Lk. 23:2 NIV).¹ In this regard, Tesfai, with deep insight, states that:

Jesus was crucified because he challenged the structures of power. His crucifixion is tied intimately with the kind of life he lived and the message he proclaimed within the context of a specific situation of injustice. His death on the cross was caused by specific political and social structures that were opposed to the kind of person Jesus was and to his message. This cross is thus the definite consequence of a life committed to the dregs of society and in favour of their liberation.²

In other words, the shameful execution of Jesus of Nazareth was a result of a commitment and a praxis that threatened the status quo of the time. The

¹ The African Bible (Nairobi: Paulines, 1999), using the text of the New American Bible reads, *They brought charges against him, saying, "We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king"*. The accompanying comment says, "The charge against Jesus is that he is revolutionary, forbids taxes to Caesar, and claims to be king." pp. 1775-1776.

² Yacob Tesfai, (ed.), *The Scandal of a Crucified World: Perspective on the Cross and Suffering*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), pp. 6-7.

cross followed a subversive life that confronted the powers that be and proposed an ideal socio-economic framework that would benefit the majority.

Jesus wanted his people to be liberated from Roman imperialism since a typical Jew made no distinction between political stability and religion. The issues at stake during the time of Jesus public ministry were political, social, economic and religious; and they were all thought of from the prism of God and His law. Jesus, being deeply involved in the politics of the time, started a religio-political movement not unlike that of the Zealots.³

In the light of this understanding, this article seeks to draw a link between the socio-political atmosphere of Jesus' Israel and 21st century Nigeria. The argument is advanced that Jesus' core teaching recommended for the socio-political and religious challenges of the Israelite society of his time will also apply to contemporary Nigerian society. It is very clear that the present political, social and economic ills of Nigeria are similar to those of Jesus time despite the time gap.

What link has Jesus of Nazareth with Nigeria? What does his teaching on the ideal state have to do with 21st century Nigeria? This paper is aimed at exploring these questions, using historical and analytical methods. Suggestions for a better Nigeria will be generated from this exploration.

Jesus of Nazareth

Jesus of Nazareth was born in a period of turbulent political, social, religious and economic crisis; one giving way to another. He was born at the time Caesar Augustus ordered a census of the entire Roman world; for all the nations of the known world were subject to Rome. Describing vividly the nature of Caesar Augustus' order, at the time Jesus was born, Sheen writes:

To every outpost, to every satrap and governor, the order went out: every Roman subject must be enrolled in his own city. On the fringe of the empire, in the little village of Nazareth, soldiers tacked up on walls the order for all the citizens to register in the town of their family origins. In accordance with the edict, Mary and Joseph set out from the village of Nazareth for the village of Bethlehem, which lies about five miles on the other side of Jerusalem.⁴

In the light of the above circumstance, Jesus was born into a carpenter's family in a troubled area of the Roman Empire.

Jesus was a Jewish peasant. He was revolutionary-like and lived under Roman occupation. He was a leader of resistance to oppression through peaceful and non-violent means. He was a teacher who drew on Jewish teachings about faith, religion, and governance. Daniel-Rops sees him as an ordinary Jew but one who challenged the system around him by daring to ask questions. He writes:

³ Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 92.

⁴ Fulton J. Sheen, *Life of Christ*, (India: Asian Trading Corporation, 2009), pp. 26-27.

Jesus Christ, whom the Christians worship as God but also truly man, was a Jew, a Palestinian Jew of the time of Augustus and Herod: he was not only a Jew by his origins, the manner of his everyday life and his spiritual message had its deep roots in the Jewish soil of Israel.⁵

When Jesus of Nazareth lived, the themes that shaped the world around him revolved around occupation, religious fundamentalism, quest to control resources and misguided social values. Avoseh's observation captures the nature of Jesus' Israel. According to him, it was "a time of turmoil, with a lot of anxious moments as a result of party acrimony. Law and morality were deteriorating at a tear-away rate. There was large scale distrust, betrayal, mal-administration, disregard for essential traditional values and general moral degeneracy".⁶ Jesus of Nazareth had to deal with these themes. He spoke of freedom, economic and political values, religion and social issues as they concern human beings and nations, Nigeria inclusive.

The core of his person and message was the arrival of the kingdom of God, with a warm spirit of mercy and an unconditional sense of compassion. Compassion, fairness and justice, he insisted, were the paths to the ideal state of all things, ideas that remain as radically and challenging in Nigeria today as they were 2,000 years back. Leaving no doubts as to what He regarded as the ideal state of affairs, Jesus declared that political freedom from Caesar was not fundamental. Genuine freedom was spiritual and meant liberation from sin. To arrive in this realm, people ought to pursue fairness, justice and righteousness.⁷ In other words, Jesus' ideal state was conditioned by his history and environment. He was a man of his time and of his place.

Teaching and Works of Jesus of Nazareth and the Nigerian Situation

The focus of this section of the paper is on political and socio-economic challenges during the time of Jesus of Nazareth and not on the type of society ripe for salvation. The emphasis is that Jesus was able to identify the socio-political problems that confronted his people, and he set out to address such challenges through his teaching and example. Mark's gospel reports that, "*as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd and he set himself to teach them at some length*" (Mark 6:34). It is, therefore, on the similarity of the challenges in the society and the solutions to them that Jesus' time is likened to contemporary Nigerian society vis-à-vis his recommendations for an ideal state.

⁵ Henry Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1980), p. 429.

⁶ M.B.M. Avoseh, "Plato's Ideal State and Contemporary Nigeria", *Bodija Journal*, No.4, June 1992, p. 99.

⁷ Sheen, *Life of Christ*, p. 200.

Jesus did not just preach a purely spiritual and religious message. He was deeply involved in the politics of the time. In this sense, it may be said, "that the relationship of Israel to the imperial power of Rome was a political issue".⁸ Legrand rightly asserts that,

In spite of the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple, the situation of the Jewish community remained precarious. It was economically impoverished. Politically it was reduced to the position of a backward area on the outskirts of large imperial powers. All too often those powers turned it into their battlefield.⁹

This situation heavily underlined Jesus' teaching and his works while on earth.

The political, socio-economic and religious teaching of Jesus evolved within the society which was its context. Jesus, wanting Israel to be liberated from foreign imperialism, reminded the people of the opening verse of the "Shema", the daily prayer. "Listen, Israel, there is no God but the Lord thy God," Deut. 6:4. His central teaching is that there is but one God alone. It is this God that he proclaimed as the one to bring "liberation to his people and salvation from our enemies, from the hands of those who hate us" Lk. 1:68, 71. The enemies of Israel were without doubt the Romans who occupied Israel and the expectation expressed was that Jesus' teaching and works would be liberating.

Jesus set out to accomplish the socio-political expectation of the people. He started the liberating work by addressing the leadership of Israel. He tried to persuade the leaders and the people of Israel to change. He challenged them to be transformed and be renewed in their commitment to the one God. Describing the challenge to new life with deep in sight, Nolan says:

Without a change of heart within Israel itself, liberation from imperialism of any kind would be impossible. That had been the message of all the prophets, including John the Baptist. Jesus was a prophet and he was involved in politics in exactly the same way as all the prophets had been.¹⁰

Our central concern is the problem of an ideal state and true happiness for the people. So, the question is: what kind of change of heart did Jesus propose for the ideal state? Jesus recommended non-resentment. He told the people to read the signs of the times (Lk. 12:54-56) and to discern for themselves (Lk. 12:57) instead of taking to violence, revolt and terrorism. As Jesus implies, the only way to guarantee progress towards an ideal state and true happiness was to love your enemies, to do good to those who hate you, to pray for those who treat you badly (Lk. 6:27-28).

This brings out the issue and concept of compassion and dialogue. Jesus proposed a change that would affect every aspect of life. He saw what no one

⁸ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, p. 93.

⁹ Lucien Legrand, *The Bible on Culture*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 44.

¹⁰ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, p. 95.

else had been able to see; "that there was more oppression and economic exploitation from within than from without".¹¹ To confirm the validity of Jesus' proposal, Ellsberg submits that, "the essential message was to be found in the law of love, the absolute rejection of violence in all its forms".¹²

The middle-class or Jewish leaders who were in revolt against Rome were themselves oppressors of the poor masses. The ethics of the Scribes and Pharisees did not reflect the highest good and well-being of the majority. The governance they rendered over the people was not anchored in God's compassion and justice. For, as Segundo explains:

The political life, the civic organization of the Jewish multitudes, their burdens, and their oppression...depended much less on the Roman Empire and much more on the theology ruling in the groups of Scribes and Pharisees. They, and not the Empire, imposed intolerable burdens on the weak... so establishing the true socio - political structure of Israel. To that extent, the counter theology of Jesus was much more political than... acts against the Rome Empire would have been.¹³

In other words, true liberation from social, political, and religious challenges means taking up the cause of human beings as such. To love your enemies is to live in solidarity with all people and to stand by human beings as beings created by one true God. Jesus of Nazareth portrayed all these ideal values in words and deeds.

Like the Israel of Jesus time, Nigeria, since the post-colonial era, has always had a high degree of political and social-economic challenges. It is no longer breaking news to hear that Nigerians are killing one another in the name of God or that those elected to serve the people are looting the public treasury.¹⁴ For this same reason, the radical Muslim feels threatened by a Christian as the head of state. Thus, there is a push for an Islamic style of governance. Political assassination is the common denominator in Nigerian polity. The situation is complicated; it is a web of intrigues, sectarian revolts, corruption and selfishness. In the light of the foregoing Zaggá laments that:

Today's leaders, however, seek relevance by accentuating or playing up our differences for their selfish gains. Publicly, these leaders present the face of patriots but, privately, they are deadly champions of ethnic and religious bigotry.¹⁵

¹¹ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, p. 94.

¹² Robert Ellsberg, (ed.), *Gandhi on Christianity*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), p. xi.

¹³ Segundo Montes, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux" in *Concilium*, January 1975, p. 118.

¹⁴ See *The Guardian*, editorial "London Jamboree", Sunday, July 29, 2012, p. 16, and *The Guardian*, Friday, July 6, 2012, p. 1ff.

¹⁵ Mohammad Zaggá, "The Descent into Savagery", *The Guardian*, Sunday, August 5, 2012, p. 15

The reports above reveal the corruptive tendencies of Nigerian leaders, especially their lack of kindness towards their fellow beings – those they claim to govern or represent.

This series of complex challenges can have the most serious consequences for nations. As in Israel during the time of Jesus, so it is with Nigeria today. Daniel-Rops notes the complexities and problem thus:

Civil wars, devastating raids, the country sweated blood. This was the origin of that confusion between religious and political attitudes that is so clearly to be seen in Jesus' time.¹⁶

In such a climate of violence and various social challenges, Jesus' teaching and works fit in quite naturally for nations, Nigeria inclusive. In this regard, Adam argues that:

The humanity of Christ is here not an illusion; its purpose is not merely to make the divine visible. On the contrary, the humanity of Christ has its own distinctive form ... by which God draws near ...¹⁷

Jesus was a great social and spiritual reformer, someone in the tradition of the sages of Israel. Jesus' radical demonstration of the Kingdom of God (the ideal state) is seen in his compassionate ministry to people in need. His teaching and works were based upon a familial relationship with a God of boundless, compassionate love.¹⁸ It is this outlook and disposition of heart that are required of leaders, particularly in Nigeria, in order to achieve political stability and the greater good of the greatest number.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The social malaise that Jesus meant to cure in Israel resembles that existing in Nigeria today. If Nigeria is to survive and remain stable as a nation, she needs to borrow a leaf from Jesus' book. In this regard, the heart of mercy and the compassion of elected officials and public servants towards the masses are fundamental for the ideal Nigerian nation. Every sphere of Nigerian life - political, economic, social and religious - is to be radically questioned from the context of compassion. Unfortunately, current government policies and ideas about what is right and just in Nigeria turn out to be loveless and therefore contrary to the will of God. For instance, in some states in Nigeria, the governors will take over farmlands of the people and hand over that same land to foreign farmers. In exchange, the youth will be removed from the farms and will be given motorcycles (*Okada*) to ride. These same governors will come up after some years to ban the use of "*Okada*" in the

¹⁶ Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, p. 57.

¹⁷ Karl Adam, *The Son of God*, (Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 1992), p. 2-3.

¹⁸ Denis Edwards, *Jesus the Wisdom of God: an Ecological Theology*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 45.

states.¹⁹ The sense of “justice” of most leaders in Nigeria is like the “justice” of the Zealots and Pharisees during the time of Jesus; it is loveless. They regret God’s compassion and generosity towards the poor masses. To such elected leaders, David Bosch’s warning is cautionary and timely. He warns them that:

Love of God, in Jesus’ ministry, is interpreted by love of neighbor. This also involves new criteria for inter-human relations. They should do this by serving others rather than ruling over them. Jesus gives himself in love to others; so should they, constrained by his love.²⁰

Jesus of Nazareth made it clear to leaders and people in authority that mercy and compassion towards the people is fundamental for any ideal state. Without compassion, all politics will be oppressive and all policies and programmes of the government useless and empty.²¹ The knowledge, compassionate heart, and uprightness in character that Jesus wished should be the attributes of leaders in any nation were amongst the same criteria that traditional African societies used in selecting a ruler. Such a ruler was expected not only to know his people, land and customs, but also to have a good heart and take serious interest in the welfare of the people. A ruler who neglected this point was dethroned. This point clearly indicates that Jesus’ recommendations for an ideal state are not alien to Nigeria as an African country.

The demands upon contemporary leaders are higher today, given the challenges of globalization. To meet up with present-day social, economic and political requirements, it becomes imperative that leaders should say yes to God and promise, not only to obey the Constitution, but to obey God Himself, Matt. 21:28-31. In that regard, when challenges come and a kingdom of compassion is being offered to them, they too can join in the celebration. To a considerable level Nigeria needs to reflect God’s compassion and forgiveness arising out of “an ethical conviction about the value of life, the dignity of the human person, and the centrality of community”.²²

Finally, those in the driver’s seats of governmental affairs should acquaint themselves not only with what is ideal for Nigeria in the abstract but also with what is best relative to the circumstance of the majority. Like Jesus of Nazareth, they should concentrate on making life more abundant and happy for the people.

¹⁹ This kind of heartless policy led to a violent protest by commercial motorcyclists in some parts of Kwara State recently. See *The Guardian*, Sunday, August 5, 2012, p. 8.

²⁰ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 36.

²¹ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, p. 98.

²² John Heagle, *Justice Rising: The Emerging Biblical Vision*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), p. 96.

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Is Postmodernism Coherent?

by Tersur Aben

Introduction

Postmodernism is a dominant way of thinking in the Western world in the 21st century and it is threatening to become the same in Africa. In this paper, I argue that postmodernism is self-defeating and contradictory. Hence, I urge African Christians to reject postmodernism but to instead hold tenaciously to the Christian truth that Jesus revealed to us. Postmodernism is characterized by a total denial of objective truth or reality outside what each person can make of his or her own reality or truth. By truth or reality I mean “that which is accessible equally to all rational human beings apart from the accidents of history, through the exercise of reason and the experience of direct contact with the divine”.¹

Postmodernists reject all traditional ways of representing objective truth or reality – in religion, science, arts, and philosophy. Instead, postmodernists ask each person to self-consciously reflect on and to depict his or her own truth from all those small carefully shaped events in his or her life. This individualistic analysis and depiction of truth or reality simply relativizes truth or reality.

As contrast tends to throw things into better light, I shall contrast postmodernism with modernism to help us better see postmodernism. Such a contrast will also clearly show that postmodernists have unwisely deconstructed truth out of our epistemic system and have left us with a vacuum regarding what is beyond our material world.

Modernism versus Postmodernism

Modernism was born at the discovery of a new method of acquiring knowledge about objective truth or reality – the scientific method. Many intellectuals and reflective persons embraced the scientific method of knowledge because its truth-claims were verifiable through carefully controlled experiments. The carefully controlled experiments let scientists prove many hypotheses or conjectures, and the proved hypotheses drastically changed our perception of the world. So modernists readily embraced science and often jettisoned revelation.

They jettisoned revelation because the claims of revelation were unverifiable through carefully controlled experiments. Rather, revelation asked us to simply accept its claims as true on the authority of the revealer, such as God or a prophet. But modernists wanted proof for every belief they held as

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans, 1992.) p. 2.

true. So they rejected all claims to truth that they could not verify. Thus, Huston Smith says, "By the 19th century, Westerners were already more certain that atoms exist than they were confident of any of the distinctive things the Bible speaks of."²

Then, in the early 20th century, modern thinkers came to see that science can only explain limited aspects of the material world but it cannot give us a total worldview. A total worldview consists not only of information about the material world, but also of information about intrinsic values, existential and ultimate meanings, and immaterial beings that are *superior* to us. But about the latter categories of entities, modernists discovered that science has nothing substantive to say. In saying nothing substantive about them, science failed at the most critical stage of our epistemic enquiry.

The failure of science to give us a total worldview meant that modernists had to turn elsewhere to gain knowledge of objective reality or truth. But where could modernists turn to get that knowledge? The modernists had no idea. It seemed that the only viable option left for modernists to take was to deny that there is objective truth or reality. This is precisely what the latter day modern person did. The denial of objective truth and reality marks the shift from modernism to postmodernism.

Postmodernism can be subdivided into three categories. (1) *Descriptive postmodernism* denies that there is an objective worldview that we can accept as true or real. Perhaps there is a worldview that impresses a limited number of people as true, but it is not possible to find a worldview that everyone will accept as true or real.³ (2) *Doctrinal postmodernism* claims that never again will we have a worldview that we can be confident about. This is because the modern person is well aware that the human mind is greatly restricted in what it can know. Even if there is a deep structure about the world, the human mind cannot know it in that form. The best the human mind can do is to re-structure reality in a way that it can grasp, but such restructuring cannot yield an objective worldview.⁴ (3) *Polemical postmodernism* urges us to reject any and all worldviews because they are oppressive. Worldviews totalize and thus marginalize minority opinions.⁵ Terry Eagleton even goes so far as to accuse worldviews of performing a secret terroristic function.⁶

I will limit my discussion of postmodernism to doctrinal postmodernism especially its discourse with Christianity. Henceforth, I will use the term

² Huston Smith, "The Religious Significance of Postmodernism," in *Faith and Philosophy* (Vol. 12, Issue 3, July 1995), p. 410. [409-422]

³ The main champion of this view is Jacques Derrida.

⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss is the main defender of this view.

⁵ The champions of this view are Jean-Francois Lyotard and, in religion, John Hick.

⁶ Terry Eagleton, "Awakening from Modernity," *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 February 1987, p. 194.

postmodernism as shorthand for *doctrinal postmodernism*. I grant that postmodernism has made a tremendous impact on Christianity – some of it good, but most of it bad. I will argue that essentially postmodernism is a self-defeating system that African Christians must reject. Rather than embrace postmodernism, I urge the church in Africa to hold firm and defend the truth that God revealed to us and that is recorded in the Bible.

The Impact Of Postmodernism

Before showing that postmodernism is a self-defeating system, let me state briefly what I see as the main positive impact of postmodernism on the Christian worldview before describing its negative impact. The positive impact of postmodernism on the Christian worldview stems from the very denial of objective truth. If there is no objective truth, then all truth-claims are relative. It follows that Christians do not need to embrace a single monolithic theology. If everyone is free to mold his or her own truth from his or her own experience of the divine, then nothing stops each Christian from molding his or her own version of Christian truth, of theology.

The denial of objective truth has, thus, licensed Christians to freely draw from their own experiences with God and to form their own Christian truth (theology) without needing approval from others. Indeed, in the absence of an absolute truth, any Christian can hold and preach whatever he or she deems true. This is precisely what is happening in modern Christendom, even in Africa. Many preachers are now preaching the gospel and establishing churches in cities and villages as they see fit. No one can stop them from preaching what they see as the gospel truth because no one actually has the total truth of Christianity. So they boldly preach the gospel and in assurance that no one can sanction them for preaching heresy.

Indeed, judging from the large numbers of people that attend these churches to hear these preachers, one can say that even the crowd cares little about any objective Christian truth. Postmodern Christians do not question the orthodoxy of the doctrines that preachers propagate from their pulpits. Rather, they simply want to enjoy a good sermon, by which they mean a sermon that entertains. Whether or not its claims are heretical, the postmodern Christian is not perturbed, but the sermon had better be fun, dynamic, and entertaining. This has led many postmodern pastors to preach salvation without talking about sin, to preach prosperity without requiring members to toil for it, and to administer healing without admitting that Christians, too, can fall sick.

In a way, then, the postmodern rejection of objective truth has allowed Christians to freely preach the gospel as they see it to the whole world. Preaching the gospel is positive. I agree with St. Paul that it does not matter what motives people have for preaching the gospel, what matters is that the gospel is being preached (Phil. 1:18).

Negative Impact of Postmodernism on Christianity

But essentially the main impact of postmodernism on Christianity is negative. Like its positive impact, its negativity also stems from the denial that there is any objective truth. The denial of objective truth implies that Christianity, too, does not have an objective truth. This renders Christianity a mere human religion designed to find God. If all religions are mere human attempts to find God then the best characterization of religions, with respect to truth, is that each has a bit of truth, but none has objective truth about God.

Each religion is contributing just a bit of the divine truth that it acquired. But no religion has been able to get the whole truth about God because there actually is no such truth about God. All religions - Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism and African Traditional Religions - are mere reports on human beings groping in the dark for God. In the postmodernist view, the best stance towards religions is *religious pluralism* - the view that all religions are equal.⁷

Now, the contention that all religions are equal contravenes the basic Christian teaching that Jesus is the only true way to God. Indeed, Christianity teaches that Jesus is the only way to God and by following Jesus we can surely find God (John 14:6). Most postmodernists regard the Christian claim as a 'scandal' of particularism and they instead advocate religious pluralism. But Christians insist that Christianity is essentially different from any other religions because Christianity depicts God as the one who is searching for humanity, not humanity searching for God. So Christianity is a unique religion.

Another negative impact of postmodernism on Christianity is its theoretical endorsement of every cultural practice, in other words, extreme *cultural pluralism*. Cultural pluralism is an attitude that welcomes the variety of cultures and life-styles within a society as enriching human life.⁸ Postmodernists regard all cultural practices as true depictions of the human spirit hence they frown at any discrediting of any culture as anti-human or ungodly. But, Christianity teaches that some cultural practices are sinful and antithetical to the human spirit or the will of God. So, while Postmodernists theoretically embrace all cultural practices, Christians denounce some cultural practices as inhumane and ungodly.

As a result, Postmodernists often accuse Christians of pushing their narrow cultural values down the throats of others. They condemn the imposition of one's cultural values or cultural practices on others as politically

⁷ Newbigin describes religious pluralism as the belief that the differences between religions are not a matter of truth and falsehood, but of different perceptions ... that to speak of religious belief as true or false is inadmissible. Religious belief is a private matter. Each of us is entitled to have, as we say, a faith of our own. See *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p. 14.

⁸ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, p.14.

incorrect. To be politically correct, therefore, postmodernists refrain from subscribing to any cultural view about what is right and wrong. Instead, postmodernists theoretically accept all cultures as equally depicting the human spirit. But human beings are so constituted that we must judge human behaviors, judging some behaviors as acceptable and judging other behaviors as repulsive. Even postmodernists do this.

Postmodernism and Coherency

Now let me turn to the main question that this paper aims to answer, namely, "Is postmodernism coherent?" Since postmodernists deny that there is absolute truth, we cannot ask whether the claims of postmodernism are true, but we can ask whether or not postmodernism is coherent. Although most postmodernists simply project postmodernism as valid and universal, Christians must question its coherency because, if a school of thought attacks the core Christian claim to objective truth, we need to know if its tenets are coherent or not. If postmodernism is incoherent then we have good grounds for dismissing it and for regarding its attack on Christianity as unfounded.

The first thing to note is that in denying objective truth, postmodernists actually present us with a proposition that they want us to accept as true. Let us call the proposition (P).

(P): There is no objective truth. Now, either (P) is true or is false. If (P) is true then we must accept it. But if (P) is false then we must reject it. Notice that if (P) is true for me then perhaps (P) is true for other people as well. In that case (P) is universally true, i.e., everyone must accept it as true. But if (P) is universally true then there is one objective truth, (P). But (P) is saying that there is no objective truth. So, if (P) is true, then (P) is false and if (P) is false, then (P) is true. So, then, (P) is self-defeating or self-contradictory. Actually, the proposition 'there is no absolute truth' falsifies itself, the illocution falsifies the locution, as in 'I promise I'm lying'. If postmodernists affirm (P) then they must grant there is at least one universal truth. But granting that defeats postmodernism, leaving us free to accept a host of other universal truths.

Perhaps, postmodernists will retort that we misconstrue (P) as stating a universal principle when in fact (P) is merely stating a relative principle, i.e., the claim that truth is limited to some people. But this would not safeguard the coherency of postmodernism. We already know that not everyone acquiesces to what is true, so nothing special is affirmed if postmodernists simply claim that (P) is true for some people. The claim that there is no absolute truth is attractive precisely because it makes a bold assertion about objective truth. If it turns out that (P) is a tepid claim about what is relatively true then its appeal will fade quickly and we will not need to take postmodernism seriously.

We can clearly see now that the main claim of postmodernism is incoherent or self-defeating; hence, we have no need to subscribe to it. I urge the Church in Africa therefore to reject postmodernism and its entailment of

religious pluralism. Instead, I urge African Christians to reaffirm the biblical truth that Jesus revealed to us about God.

The Objective Christian Truth

The objective Christian truth that I urge the church in Africa to embrace can be described in three statements: (1) Jesus is the true revealer of God to us. (2) Salvation is in Jesus alone. (3) The Bible is God's word to us. Let me briefly explain these items.

1. Jesus is the true revealer of God to us.

This truth implies that outside of Jesus we cannot truly know God. The reason Jesus is the only true revealer of God to us is that Jesus is the Son of God who came into the world in the form of man to show us God. By seeing Jesus, we see God. Jesus says: "Whosoever has seen me has seen the Father" and "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (Jn 14:7, 9b, 10,11).

Jesus reveals God's true nature, will, and words to us in a manner that we can easily see, understand, and accept. In Jesus, we see that the true nature of God requires a sacrificial love for others. The Bible attests to God's love for the world in that God gave his only Son to die for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Clearly, to know God is to experience the divine love for humanity.

Jesus reveals God's will as consisting in God's distaste for sin and commitment to save us from sin. God wills to make us co-heirs with Jesus and to bring us into his rest in heaven. It was to fulfill this specific decree of God for us that Jesus came into the world. Jesus carried out the will God through his suffering and death on Calvary by which he redeemed us and brought us back to God. The entire work of Jesus Christ on earth was to fulfill God's will to redeem us from sin.

The miracles of Jesus corrected the aberrant conditions Satan imposed on the world as a result of Adam's sin. In performing those miracles, Jesus clearly showed us that God wills us to have good health, live freely (that is, not possessed by demons), and to prosper on earth. Thus Jesus healed all the sick, cast out demons, and fed the hungry wherever he went on earth. Since this is the eternal will of God for humanity, Jesus did not leave this world without first commissioning and empowering his disciples to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cast out demons, and feed the hungry in the world.

Jesus attests to his perfect fulfillment of the will of God for us by saying that what he hears from the Father that is what he tells us. Jesus spoke the word of God calmly but it affected us with much power. Clearly, Jesus was the personified eternal word of God to us. Although some theologians reject the personification of God's word in their denial of the incarnation, by regarding it as metaphor or myth,⁹ the full effect of Jesus' words on humanity in the past

⁹ John Hick, "The Logic of God Incarnate," *Religious Studies* (25, 1989), pp. 409-421.

2000 years can be explained only by granting that Jesus was God incarnate.

2. Only Jesus can save.

Salvation is mainly and strictly a Christian concept. Other religions do not teach that human beings are saved from sin in the way that Christianity does. Other religions may teach members to be good or how to achieve oneness with deity, but they do not teach that we are saved from sin through the death of another person. Christians cannot give up the concept of salvation from sin without thereby forfeiting their own unique identity.

From the Biblical teaching that only Jesus can save us from sin, we can infer that adherents to other religions are doomed. The Bible also teaches that our salvation is tied to our knowledge of the truth: 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.' Another way of stating this is, "You will know Jesus and Jesus will set you free". It is this concept of truth that postmodernists want to obliterate by denying objective truth and by advocating religious pluralism. We must affirm that our salvation comes only through Jesus. The Christian view of salvation goes against Hick's contention that salvation is the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness and that this transformation is taught in all the religions of the world.¹⁰ Evidently, what Hick means by salvation is directly opposed to what Christians mean by salvation. The ground for the difference is that while religious pluralists maintain universal salvation of adherents of all religions, Christianity maintains that we are saved only through Christ. If salvation is only through Christ then only Christians are saved and reach heaven. Our task is to help people find Jesus who is the way to heaven.

Postmodernism often causes Westerners to resist the gospel and to block evangelism or missions - logical actions if one assumes the superiority of a secular society. Although much of Africa is not actively resisting the gospel truth on secular grounds, even here some pockets of resistance are emerging as a consequence of postmodernist influence. The result is that there are some missionaries who advocate inter-religious dialogue over evangelism. I think the church in Africa should not hoard the eternal truth of God revealed to us through Jesus. We must proclaim the gospel truth to all people.

3. The Bible is God's word to us.

Christians believe that the Bible is truly God's words to us. The Bible tells us not only the truth about God and his relationship to the world but it also tells us the truth about the world and its relationship to God. No book has given us such a total worldview regarding cosmic realities, the divine, and the relationship that holds between them. The Bible's historical books, its poetic books, the gospels, and its moral codes attest to the objective truth that God created this world, and that he is sustaining it on a daily basis. Without the

¹⁰ John Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Salvation," *Faith and Philosophy* (Vol. 5, Issue 44, 1988), p. 366.

creative and sustaining oversight of God for the world, it could not exist.

Christians cannot follow postmodernism into denying the truths revealed in the Bible; rather they must embrace and teach those truths. It is vital for us to note that religion *per se* is neither true nor false, just as art *per se* is neither true nor false. It is the message that is contained in the literature of a religion that is evaluated as true or false. Thus, when we say that the Bible is true, what we mean is that the message of the Bible is true. What the Bible says about God and the world or the world and God is absolutely true. The truth-claims of the Bible furthermore put Christianity above other religions.

Conclusion

Christians should ignore postmodernism. This recommendation may sound strange to some people, but there is really no sense in dialoguing with someone who denies objective truth. Such a person would deny that anything you say could amount to an objective truth. In his or her eyes, there is no truth of the matter because there is no objective, absolute truth. Your assertions would be relativized as your truth, but not theirs. In order to have a meaningful discussion with anyone both parties must subscribe to the idea that there is a truth to be found regarding the issue you are discussing. Only then could you hope to reach something approximating to "the truth" as result of your discussion. If one of you says that there is no objective truth to be found, then there is no sense talking. It is this that makes me urge Christians to ignore postmodernism and to simply go on preaching the truth of God as revealed in the Bible and in Creation. My recommendation also entails the rejection of religious pluralism. Christians should insist on the particularity of Christianity as the only true religion because it alone is the storehouse of God's truth. They must continue to evangelize the world because they know that other religions do not have a true concept of salvation.

Like St. Paul, we should point everyone to Yahweh as the unknown God for whom they are searching. We must proclaim the good news that God came to earth as Jesus Christ to seek and to save the lost. While holding tenaciously to the Christian truth about God, and to the church's mission to the world, African Christians can continue to engage others with the hope of bringing them into the kingdom of God. But, even if other people reject the gospel, we must respect them as fellow human beings.

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Creative Teaching Methods in Theological Education

by Mark A. Olander

Introduction

As teachers in theological education, we always have room for improvement. No matter how many years we have taught, we have much more to learn as educators. The best teachers I know are those who have a hunger to learn more about how they can improve their effectiveness as facilitators in helping their students learn and grow.

Many years ago I read a very challenging book entitled *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning* by James Wilhoit. Perhaps you have read it yourself. If you haven't, I would highly recommend that you do. In his book, Wilhoit makes the following thought-provoking statement:

Our teaching methods have usually been caught from our own teachers. There is nothing necessarily wrong with such subconscious imitation of other educators, but at the same time Christian teachers should self-consciously examine the way they teach...Christian educators need to ask themselves, "Why do I teach the way I do?"¹

In this article, I would like to encourage you to reflect on the question that Wilhoit raises. To a large extent, our effectiveness as theological educators depends upon the teaching methods we use and the skill with which we use them. I would like to expand your awareness of the multitude of possibilities before us in the educational arena. And I would like to encourage you to break out of your routine and try some creative methods that you may never have used before. Who knows? Perhaps they will breath some new life into your teaching and help your students get a renewed enthusiasm for learning. Now that would be good for us all!

Why Creative Teaching Methods Are Essential

Creative teaching methods are extremely important for several reasons. First of all, methods facilitate student learning and comprehension. Secondly, they bring students and content together. Thirdly, they determine the level of impact the learning experience will have upon the students. Fourthly, they are ways of doing something in a creative and interesting way. Fifthly, methods that are creative increase student motivation and enthusiasm for learning. And lastly, methods have the potential of making educational experiences (inside and outside the classroom) enjoyable!

¹ James, Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991, p. 61.

Types of Teaching Methods

Educators use different terms when categorizing the various types of teaching methods. For the purposes of our discussion in this article, I will use the terms “impressional methods” and “expressional methods”. These terms refer primarily to the role the students play when these methods are used by their teachers. Both categories have a wide variety of methods that, if used skillfully, can be very effective in the educational setting.

1. Impressional Methods

Impressional methods are those in which the students are primarily in the role of observers in which some type of information is *impressed* upon them. Some of the examples of this approach include the following: lecture, demonstration, object lessons, videos, guest speakers, storytelling, overhead projector presentations, powerpoint presentations, paradigms, and chalkboard or dry-erase board presentations.

The primary advantage of impressional methods is that they enable the teacher to cover a large amount of material in a relatively short period of time. They also are desirable by teachers because it is easier to predict the amount of time needed to present the material to students. The main disadvantage of this approach to teaching and learning is that students tend to be in a passive role and therefore are not as engaged in the educational process. This can result in hindering student motivation and decreasing the quality of the learning experience.

From what I've observed during my years of being involved in theological education in Africa, it seems that as teachers we generally prefer impressional methods because we tend to use them most of the time. Probably one reason for this tendency is that most of us have been taught this way when we were students ourselves. It is natural to teach the way we have been taught. That is the model we have most often seen and experienced in our own educational pilgrimage. Certainly, impressional methods can be very effective in many cases. However, there is another category of methods which opens up other possibilities for us.

2. Expressional Methods

Expressional methods are those in which the students take a more active role because they are encouraged to become personally involved in the learning process. When this type of teaching method is used, students are able in some way to “express” themselves. Some examples of this type of teaching methods include the following: dramas, skits, role plays, student presentations, individual or group research projects, group presentations, reflection papers, reaction papers, creative writing, narrative writing, diad discussions, triad discussions, small group discussions, class discussions, student debates, critical book reviews, forum discussion, panel discussion (e.g. guest panel, student panel, “floating” panel), interview (in class or as

homework), question & answer, letter writing, brainstorming, field trips, lecture with discussion, guided learning experiences, songs, simulation games, case studies, practical assignments (on the job training), art projects, mime, “fish bowl” discussions, problem-solving exercises, and planning and leading workshops or seminars.

The use of expressional methods can definitely enhance student motivation because students are quite actively involved. Research has shown that we tend to learn more when we are actively participating in the educational process. As the old proverb says, *“I hear, I forget. I see, I remember. I do, I understand.”* I have often noticed that my students enjoy interactive methods more than impressional methods because they are much more engaged. One of the few disadvantages of using expressional methods is that teachers are not able to cover as much material because it takes more time when students actively participate in raising questions and discussing what they are learning. One can never know for sure how much time some interactive methods will require to be effective. To use expressional methods, a teacher needs to exercise quite a bit of creativity. He or she needs to “think outside the box” and encourage the students to do the same.

How To Choose Which Method to Use

With all these possibilities, how does a teacher know which method(s) to use? There are at least five factors to consider. First, we need to consider our learning objectives. What exactly is the main purpose of the lesson? Second, we need to consider our students. How old are they? What kind of learning experiences have they been exposed to in the past? What is the academic level of the students? How many are there in the class? Next, we should consider how much time we have to work with. Do we have a fifty minute class period or a two-and-a-half hour class session? Fourth, we need to consider the educational setting. Are we going to be in a classroom or outside? Can the chairs be moved? And finally, we need to consider what equipment is available for us to use. Is there a chalk board? If so, is there any chalk around? Is there electricity in the building? Are there projectors that we can use? If so, are the projectors in working condition? Are there any appropriate DVD’s or video tapes that we can use?

Guidelines for Using Teaching Methods

There are certain basic guidelines we should keep in mind as we use these various teaching methods: (1) a teaching method is a means to an end, not an end in itself; (2) when our methodology is predictable, the potential for boredom is greatly increased; (3) the “worst” teaching method is the one we use all the time!; (4) using a variety of methods enhances student interest and makes learning more enjoyable; (5) the skill of the teacher has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of a method; (6) we should be willing to experiment and

try different methods; (7) we need to recognize the fact that every teaching method has inherent strengths and weaknesses – there is no such thing as a perfect method which works effectively at all times, with all students, and in all settings; and (8) our primary concern should be which methods will be most helpful to our students rather than which methods are we the most comfortable using.

Building Relationships with Students is Essential

Those of us who live and work in Africa recognize how important relationships are to the African people. We can use all the best teaching and learning methods possible, but if we don't have a good relationship with our students, we will ultimately be ineffective as teachers. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we be very intentional about establishing good healthy relationships with our students. They really don't care how much or what we know, unless they know that we genuinely care for them and respect them as individuals who are valuable in God's sight and ours. Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter speak clearly to this issue when they make the following observation:

Christian teachers must build relationships with students before they can teach effectively. Among a great many tribes in Africa, a wealth-in-people concept rather than a wealth-in-information concept predominates. The teacher is seen as someone who comes alongside students to help in their struggle to learn, which involves cooperative, not individual, effort. If one does not build personal relationships with students, they [the students] cannot learn well.²

Conclusion

Learning should be enjoyable and we as teachers have a major role to play in making that possible. We should strive to make our time with students a pleasant experience for them and ourselves. As we noted earlier, we can all improve in our use of teaching methods. As teachers in theological schools, we should always be looking for new ways of helping our students understand new truths, develop their Christian character, and refine their ministry skills.

I personally am greatly challenged by Proverbs 15:2 which says, "A wise teacher makes learning a joy; a rebellious teacher spouts foolishness." (The Living Bible) I'm sure that you, like me, desire to be a wise teacher that God can use to make learning a joy for our students. After all, who says that being a student has to be boring and unpleasant? The truth is that both we as teachers and our students can actually enjoy the experience of learning together! It will require some hard work and creativity on our part as we use a variety of teaching methods, but it will most definitely be worth the effort. Both our students and we will benefit as a result.

² Judith E. and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003, p. 42.

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Pentecostals and Others: Challenging and Learning from Each Other

by Danny McCain

Introduction

Christianity is not a faith that has been practiced in exactly the same way by every adherent. Family, culture and even personality have influenced Christian worship and practice to some extent. For example, in the early church, many Jewish Christians believed that all Christians should be circumcised if they wanted to be true worshippers of God. Gentile believers did not think that was necessary. The Jerusalem Council resolved this issue in Acts 15 where Peter gave those memorable words: *“He made no distinction between **us and them**”* (15:9). However, that decision did not automatically change the minds of some who believed this so strongly. It did, however, stop them from requiring circumcision of Gentile believers. The issue of circumcision for Gentiles was a theological issue that had a “right or wrong” answer.

On the other hand, Romans 14 talks about other disagreements. The Apostle Paul wrote that some people observed one day as more important than another while others believed that every day was the same (Romans 14:5). Some Christians ate only vegetables while others ate meat and other things (14:6). These were cultural issues that did not have a right and wrong position though those who believed such things no doubt appealed to sacred scriptures and used other religious arguments to support their own positions.

Movements within Christianity

Church history has been filled with other disagreements. Some were serious theological issues and others had more to do with lifestyle or method of worship or ministry. Most involved some combination of the theological issues and practical issues because most people support their divergent lifestyles or worship issues with theological arguments.

In reflecting about the various movements of Christianity throughout church history, I am convinced that most of these began because their founders had rediscovered a truth that had been neglected or forgotten and it became their objective to restore that truth to the Christian faith. Perhaps the best example is the Protestant Reformation itself. Martin Luther and other reformers re-discovered the doctrine of justification by faith and related doctrines and thus the Protestant Reformation was born.

Even within Protestantism, movements have developed to address some real or perceived theological weakness. John Wesley was primarily an evangelist but also stressed holiness and out of his teachings the holiness movement was born. George Fox gained insight into the “inner light” and the

Quaker movement was born that stressed the importance of hearing from God personally. While doing evangelism, William Booth observed the great needs around him in London related to poverty and privation and started an organization that eventually became the Salvation Army, the predecessor to hundreds of organizations that focus on the physical and emotional and health-related needs of people.

I have also observed that as most of these movements grow, they so emphasize their particular discovery that they often go too far and get out of balance. The overemphasis of a truth can be almost as perilous as under-emphasis. Thus many parts of the holiness movement have become so enamored with holiness that they ignore evangelism, social justice and other important issues. The Salvation Army has become so involved in social issues that, in some parts of the world, it has largely neglected evangelism that was the motivating issue of its founder. However, in their overemphasis, these movements tend to help pull the rest of the body of Christ back to a more balanced view of the doctrine or practice being emphasized.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements

It is my conviction that the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements that have developed within the last century have re-discovered and re-emphasized an important doctrine that had been largely ignored in many mainline churches - the doctrine and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The spontaneous speaking in tongues in Topeka, Kansas in 1901 and in Asuzu Street Revival in Los Angeles, California in 1906, convinced the participants that the Holy Spirit could be personally appropriated in our day and could manifest himself today in the same way he did in the Acts of the Apostles. This movement slowly developed with the creation of various Pentecostal denominations, like the Assemblies of God and others.

In the 1960's a parallel movement began to develop that became known as the Charismatic Movement. The focus of this movement was on a broader application of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to include other gifts that had not been stressed as much in the earlier part of the Pentecostal movement. This movement stressed healing and prophecy and spiritual deliverance. It also attracted adherents from a much broader demographic background, including practically all denominations and all social classes.

The early Pentecostals faced scathing ridicule and severe opposition by the secular press as well as other Christians. They were accused of being a cult and some believed their activities were inspired by the devil. However, it appears that the attitude of the non-Pentecostal world has largely moved beyond that point now and, as a general rule, Christians from most traditions extend a warm hand of fellowship to the Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Others have documented the history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria so I will not attempt to do that. I will simply say I see Pentecostalism as a growing

mighty river coming to Nigeria in three separate streams. First, there was the indigenous wave of charismatic leaders who stressed prayer, prophecy and healing, that included people like Garrick Braide, Joseph Babalola and others. As far as we know, these men had no contact with Charles Parham or William Seymore, the Americans who are considered the founders of Pentecostalism. This led to an indigenous movement stressing prophecy, divine healing, and other miraculous practices later associated with Pentecostalism. Second, there was a flow of Pentecostalism from the Western world, often invited by Nigerians who had been associated in one way or another with the earlier indigenous movement. These included the British Apostolic Church, the Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Gospel Church. This part of the movement has been known as classical Pentecostalism. And, third, there was the burst of revivalism that swept across the universities of Nigeria in the early 1970's that had a distinct Pentecostal flavor and has been sometimes called "Neo-Pentecostalism." There are distinct elements of those movements still present but it seems to me that those movements have merged or are merging into one big mighty bubbling Pentecostal river. Regardless of their roots, the Christians from these backgrounds are looking and acting more alike.

However, that is only one part of the Pentecostal story. Another result of the 1970's Neo-Pentecostal movement was an awakening Charismatic movement within the mainline churches. Through such organizations as the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, people at the higher social levels of society and people from mainline churches became attracted to the Charismatic message. Some moved over to Pentecostal churches but many remained in their own denominations and helped to spread the Pentecostal fire in them. Because of the influence of these Pentecostals or Pentecostal sympathizers within the congregation and a greater amount of interaction with Pentecostal leaders, the attitude toward Pentecostalism has gradually shifted in many of the mainline churches from something negative to something at least neutral and more often than not a positive thing today.

The last 40 years have seen Pentecostalism grow from a small percentage of the church to a significant number, somewhere between 30 and 50 percent. Although the line is becoming more blurred between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals, as a general rule, believers and churches still identify themselves as Pentecostals or non-Pentecostals.

Key Issue: Learning and Challenging Each Other

The key question that I would like to address in this paper is this: What have these two groups learned and what can they learn from each other and what can they teach each other? Obviously, there has been a lot of mutual learning and some challenging and there will continue to be more in the future. The new Pentecostal movement probably agrees with mainstream Christianity in 90 percent of what it believes and practices. Because it grew out of mainstream Christianity it will forever be inseparably linked with that

movement. On the other hand, mainstream Christianity has been observing Pentecostalism for many years now and, though at times it has been grudging, mainstream Christianity has learned from the younger movement and has even adjusted some of its practices and emphases based upon its observations of and interactions with the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

The issues of comparison and relationship between these two movements that will be examined in this paper are not clear-cut issues where one side has always been right and the other side has always been wrong. Rather, the issues addressed herein reflect degrees of emphasis and perhaps degrees of accuracy. Like most movements, the various emphases developed within the movement have often been extreme but they have contributed something valuable to the outsiders. They have forced the broader body of Christ to re-evaluate its attitudes and beliefs about these issues and often move back closer to the truth.

What Can the Rest of Christianity Learn from Pentecostals?

We will now look at what the mainstream churches and denominations have learned and need to learn from the Pentecostals and Charismatics.

1. Authentic Worship

Perhaps the most obvious thing that mainstream Christianity has learned and borrowed from Pentecostalism in the last 30 years or so has been related to worship. When the missionaries planted the church in Nigeria, they tended to reproduce the kind of Christianity that had been practiced in their home countries and in their home churches. This was perfectly normal because they perpetuated what they understood and what they had experienced. Therefore, missionaries built church buildings with crosses on them like those “back home.” They brought and had made clerical garments that looked like those that were used where they were raised. They translated the songs and hymns into local languages but used the tunes for those songs that were common outside Africa. The order of the services was often a carbon copy of what they had practiced elsewhere.

In addition, the missionaries tended to frown on those cultural things that they did not feel comfortable with.¹ Traditional African instruments were not allowed because first, the missionaries associated them with traditional

¹ This paper is not intended to criticize the missionaries who came to Africa. There may have never been a more successful generation of Christian missionaries than those who planted the church in Africa because the church has grown more rapidly in Africa than perhaps any other part of the world. In addition, the weaknesses of the missionaries were not unique. Most missionaries doing cross-cultural ministry tend to reproduce themselves, including our modern Nigerian and African missionaries. Though we do not seek to criticize missionaries, we certainly can learn from them, from both their positive and negative contributions.

religions and second, drums were not used in worship where the missionaries came from. Although Africans love to sing and had developed a natural rhythmic movement of the body with their singing, this was not tolerated because dancing was inconsistent with the dignity of the European church, and it was considered worldly and sensual by many of the churches that had sponsored the missionaries.

When Pentecostalism came to Nigeria and particularly the third phase, that of the post-Civil War revival in the universities, it came to those who already had a Christian background and had some understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. However, when these people began to experience the fresh fire of the Holy Spirit, they were not like their illiterate grandparents who had first received the gospel. These were well-educated thoughtful young people who were not intimidated by white missionaries or church precedent and thus began to put their own stamp upon the new wave of Christianity they had embraced. And one of the things that began to change was their style of worship. They began to sing more choruses. They raised their hands in worship. They resurrected and sanctified not only their traditional instruments but their traditional dance movements and brought them into the church and used them to worship the Lord. The mission planted churches had focused on a style of worship that was consistent with their rational, calm, non-emotional European worldview. However, these young people who had recently had such liberating experiences with the power of the Holy Spirit, expanded that liberty to their worship and soon began to be much freer and expressive in their worship, more consistent with an African way of doing things.

It should be noted that the style of worship that has developed in Africa is not entirely unique to Africa. Singing with emotion and enthusiasm and lifting hands in worship was characteristic of the holiness movement out of which the Pentecostal movement developed well over 100 years ago. In addition, the style of worship in most Pentecostal churches is not purely African. Although Pentecostals did help open the door for Africa instruments to come back to the church, in nearly all African Pentecostal churches worship is led by musicians using western instruments, including guitars and western style drums. And many of the songs and choruses come from outside of Africa. However, when the freer style of worship came to Africa, it met a community ready to embrace it because it fit the African context better.

When this freer and more intense style of worship entered the Pentecostal churches, it was warmly embraced especially by the younger generation. This was a way that they could worship God in an enjoyable manner. Worship was no longer boring but exciting. And as young people in the mainstream churches began to see the excitement of the worship in the Pentecostal churches, they began going to them. Thus the growth of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches has been primarily among young people. Pentecostal churches are still filled with young people. In research recently conducted by

my colleagues, they discovered that 61 percent of those who attend Pentecostal churches are between the ages of 18 and 32 and that only 13 percent of the typical Pentecostal congregation is above the age of 43.²

Mainstream churches responded in two different ways. At first, they criticized. The loud and boisterous type of worship was not consistent with what they were accustomed to. They had partially absorbed the philosophy of dignified worship from the missionaries. They also were not happy to see their young people leaving their churches. This seemed like apostasy. However, complaining did not help. The young people kept leaving. We have a proverb in my country that says, "If you cannot beat them, join them." So, after a while, many mainstream churches started getting band sets, creating worship teams and allowing and even encouraging a more open and free style of worship.

And what has been the result? First this new type of worship has slowed down the departure of the youth from the traditional churches.³ Second, livelier and more interactive worship has been a blessing to those mainstream churches. Their people are enjoying worship more. Even the older people have largely become accustomed to the new style of worship and are enjoying it. And more genuine personal worship is one of the best tools for providing spiritual vitality for the individual believer. A worshipping person is a growing person and a happy person and a person who will overcome the temptations of life. More genuine worship also helps to build up the church. In addition to keeping the members happy and growing, genuine worship impresses unbelievers who may visit the church and causes them to recognize that God is truly among us (1 Corinthians 14:24).

Even though it is not purely Africa, why has the more Pentecostal style of worship been received so well? First, it is more holistic. Jesus taught us that we should "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*" (Mark 12:30). If we are to love the Lord that way, then we should also worship the Lord with our heart, soul, mind and strength. Western worship tends to appeal to the mind. Charles Wesley's hymns are almost like lectures in systematic theology. Certainly we must have our minds involved in worship but worship must not stop there. The "*heart and the soul*" represent the emotions. Worship has always been emotional to some extent but the Pentecostals have helped to demonstrate that one can express emotions publicly without shame or embarrassment.

² K.A. Korb, and S.K. Kumswa, *Preliminary Report of Pentecostal Churchgoers in Northern Nigeria: NPCRC Technical Report #N1103*. Jos: Nigeria Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre, November 2011, p. 5.

³ I spoke in a Youth Convention of the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria – EYN) in Abuja on 17 June 2011. The singing and dancing and excitement of that service could not be distinguished between a similar group of Pentecostal students. The EYN leaders present seemed to be very happy with the enthusiasm and intensity that these EYN youth demonstrated.

Worshipping the Lord with the body is something Africans were forbidden to do for a long time. However, now that Pentecostalism has helped to remove that barrier, Africans are showing the world how to worship the Lord with the body. David danced before the Lord (2 Samuel 6:14) and African Christians are now doing the same thing.

I am convinced that the Pentecostal style of worship that has developed in Nigeria is consistent with African styles of communication. I speak specifically of the frequent use of simple choruses in Pentecostal churches. These are short songs with only a few words that make one simple point. Obviously, Africa is not the only place where such choruses are used. In addition such courses were sung to some extent before the coming of Pentecostalism. However, these kinds of choruses have been greatly utilized by the Pentecostals and they have taken deep root in Africa. Why? It is an undisputed fact that one of the most important ways that Africans have communicated information from one generation to the other is through proverbs. A proverb is a short memorable statement that teaches some point of wisdom. Therefore, traditionally Africans have taught and learned best through short bite-size pieces of information. The modern choruses that are sung in most churches today take advantage of that learning style. Unlike many of the traditional hymns that helped to teach doctrine, these choruses contain one piece of information and that one truth is something with which one can truly worship.

For example, I recently heard a Pidgin English chorus that says:

Dis kind God-o.

I never see his kind-o.

Dis kind God-o.

Blessed be his holy name.

The simple point that the song makes is that God is unique; he is one of a kind; there is no other God like this God. This is consistent with such scriptures as Isaiah 40:28 which says: *“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”*⁴ This is also consistent with songs like Don Moen’s adaptation of Ex. 15:11,

Who is like unto Thee

O Lord among the gods?

Who is like unto Thee

Glorious in holiness

Fearful in praises

Doing wonders

Who is like unto Thee?

⁴ This theme is especially stressed in the Wisdom Literature. For example, Zophar asks Job: *“Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?”* (Job 11:7). See also Job 5:9, 33:13, 37:23 and Ecclesiastes 3:11, 8:17.

Though in less elegant words, this course expresses the same awe and worship of God, as Isaac Watts glorious hymn that declares:

*I sing the mighty power of God, that made the mountains rise;
That spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at His command, and all the stars obey.*⁵

However this simple little course fits into the African way of making one point in a simple memorable manner. It has in essence become a musical proverb and, as such, is a very effective communication tool in Africa.

Because this kind of music and worship is appealing to most Africans, these Pentecostal songs have spread from Pentecostal churches to nearly all churches. This merger has taken place fairly naturally to the point that most youth in non-Pentecostal churches would hardly remember that their churches did not worship like this in their father's generation. All Christians should be grateful to the Pentecostals for helping to make worship more enjoyable, more meaningful and more personal.

2. Optimistic View of Life

One of the major characteristics of Pentecostals is their belief that Jesus is just as capable and willing to work miracles today as he was in the apostolic era. Most Pentecostals have a strong conviction that God can use their simple faith to accomplish mighty things. If this is true, then nothing in this life is too difficult and all things are possible by faith.

Although my brother is desperately sick, faith can make him well.

Although we have no money for this project, we will start it anyway.

Although this community has resisted the gospel, God will change them.

These are typical attitudes and responses of the Pentecostals. Such faith creates an optimistic view of life and ministry and this, in turn, encourages the belief that we do not have to accept the barriers to success and blessing in our lives; we can overcome them by the power of God.

2.1 The Success of Faith

This kind of faith encourages people to engage in projects that wise administrators would discourage because they violate good principles of management. And as a result of this faith, amazing things often happen. For example, Gbile Akane sponsors several conferences and workshops every year at the Peace House in Gboko, Benue State. He invites and provides accommodation and feeding to the thousands of participants. Amazingly, he says nothing about money publicly and does not even take up an offering. His view is that if God has called him to do this ministry, no matter how impossible it seems, it will be accomplished by faith in the power of God. He does not

⁵ Isaac Watts, "I Sing the Mighty Power of God" in *Worship and Service Hymnal*, Carol Stream, Ill.: Hope Publishing Company, 1952, Hymn 19.

allow the difficulty in raising money to interfere with the ministry God has called him to do. His eye of faith is able to see past the temporary problems to the successful ministry that will be accomplished and he is able to move forward with optimism and joy.

This belief and practice has obviously led to some painful disappointments by some. I have heard of at least one experience in which a person felt that God had called him and his family to go overseas to do missions work. Even though he did not have money, he exercised his faith and went to the airport anyway. There was no miracle at the airport so he was disappointed and had to return home embarrassed and chastised that he had apparently not correctly heard the voice of God.

However, in spite of disappointments and abuse of this system, the optimistic view of life that is produced by a robust faith is a positive thing. Many people are willing to accept the status quo because it seems impossible to change things. It is the optimists who can see opportunities in problems. It is only those who are willing to take risks that will see great things accomplished. Optimistic faith is the starting point in seeing mighty things accomplished for the kingdom of God.

2.2 “Positive Confession”

One of the specific manifestations of this optimistic attitude in Pentecostal circles is what is called “positive confession.” This means that even when a person experiences some real problem such as being diagnosed with cancer, that person must continue to confess that he or she is well and must not confess anything negative even what appears to be the truth. The belief is that our words have power and we will become and we will experience what our mouth confesses. I personally believe that this belief is obviously a misunderstanding of the principle of faith. Faith does not deny reality. Paul confessed a whole lot of negative things he had experienced in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 and he anticipated that we would all face “*trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword*” (Romans 8:35). However he also believed that God’s grace was sufficient to make us “*more than conquerors*” (8:37). To refuse to acknowledge reality is a denial of truth. Dishonesty and deception are somewhere near the heart of all sin (John 8:44). However, the eye of faith can look beyond the current real condition to a better future that is seen by optimistic faith.

Though I personally reject the teaching of “positive confession” as it is commonly presented in Pentecostal circles, there is a small grain of truth in it. The Christian doctrine of hope is one of the most neglected doctrines in the Bible. The Apostle Paul referred to hope 55 times in his epistles and declared that it, along with faith and love were three of the greatest concepts in the world (1 Corinthians 13:13). Hope does not deny reality but it does deliberately choose to look on the positive side of reality. One of the most powerful and convicting passages of Scripture in the Bible is Philippians 4:8: “*Finally,*

brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Faith is able to remember that God can work all things out for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28) and chooses to endure pain and suffering joyfully until there is relief and success.

Whereas I encourage our Pentecostal brothers to make correctives to the abuses of the positive confession theology, I encourage my non-Pentecostal brothers to focus more attention on the doctrine of hope. The ultimate positive doctrine is the resurrection of the dead. If God can raise the dead, God can reverse any negative situation that needs to be reversed and should he choose to use a specific negative thing in our lives, as he often does, he will give us the grace to face it with hope and joy.

One specific manifestation of this optimistic view of life has been the engagement of Pentecostals in politics. Many Christians within the mainstream have viewed politics as a black hole that corrupted everyone it touched. Therefore, if a person cherished his spiritual life he would stay away from politics. Engaging in politics was evidence of backsliding. However, Pentecostals with their optimistic outlook on life have decided to engage. They believe that the light of the gospel is greater than the darkness of corruption and therefore, many have chosen to become involved in politics. For example the present Secretary to the Federal Government and former president of the Senate is a Pentecostal. Anyim Pius Anyim is a thoughtful Pentecostal and a member of the Assemblies of God. This kind of optimistic faith is contagious and should indeed be imitated by all God-fearing Christians.

2.3 Summary

The western mind often reacts negatively when it hears a Pentecostal leader declaring that a certain thing will happen. In interacting with some international websites discussing the issue of the prosperity gospel, one of the frequent complaints was that African Pentecostals promise too much. They speak as if a need had already been fulfilled rather than speaking as if it might be fulfilled. However, my reaction to those comments is that it is not only the African Pentecostals who do this. Many if not most Africans tend to speak in absolute terms about all areas of life. The West African hyperbole, known worldwide, is simply a linguistic way of presenting a positive view of life and particularly specific projects. Though this can certainly be abused, as a general rule such rhetoric is not intended to deceive and is not interpreted as a guarantee that what is requested will happen. It is a positive declaration of what is hoped for. It is a prayer to God that the positive statement will become a reality.

Therefore, though we should always use a little sanctified common sense, the larger body of Christ should be challenged by the faith of the Pentecostals. Christians should not be daunted by corruption and evil in society and should engage the world. The realistic Western worldview should not discourage

believers from attempting and expecting great things from God. And we must not defeat ourselves by anticipating the negative responses of others.

3. Relevance

One of the interesting phenomena of Nigeria's Neo-Pentecostalism in the last 30 years is that it has largely been led by leaders with little or no theological education. The current leaders of Pentecostalism include architects (Paul Adefarasin and Sam Adeyemi), academics (W.F. Kumuyi, Enoch Adeboye and Daniel Oluokoya), management experts (Wale Adefarasin) medical doctors (Tony Rapu), businessmen (William Okoye), and other professions. Although not everyone is agreed that this has been a positive thing, one result that has come out of it is that these modern Pentecostal leaders have tended to have more of a practical needs-based ministry than a ministry based purely on theology. That means that, since many of the modern Pentecostal leaders have spent at least part of their adult lives in the "real world", they tend to be more in tune with contemporary issues and therefore try to make their ministries more relevant to modern needs and problems.

The early missionary-based Christianity focused largely on evangelism to produce people who would be prepared to experience eternal life in heaven and personal holiness and integrity in this life. There was not as much focus on responding to the discouraging and degrading problems that people faced. The willingness of the missionaries to make sacrifices to leave their homes and come to Africa motivated them to try to see those same qualities reproduced in their converts. Life was not intended to be easy or fun. Life was serious and that implied overcoming life's difficulties with faith and discipline and commitment. Thus, privation and sickness and mistreatment and discrimination and persecution and other difficulties of life were to be accepted with stoical determination and commitment. Obviously the missionaries encouraged sanitation and built hospitals and started schools and did other things that would in a general sense elevate the standard of living. However, there was a general acceptance that life would normally be difficult on a personal basis.

Interestingly, the Pentecostals, and particular the neo-Pentecostals who began to spring up in the seventies with their optimism and faith believed that the life on this earth here and now could and should be better because of the gospel. They stressed the words that Jesus read from the Old Testament in the synagogue in his hometown: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"* (Luke 4:18-19). In that scripture, several of the key problems of Nigerian society are outlined, including poverty, spiritual bondage and oppression, sickness and physical disabilities. This message resonated well with these Pentecostals who had been baptized with an optimistic message of faith and hope. I will now focus

on three of these problems that many Pentecostal leaders have attempted to address.

3.1 Poverty

Unfortunately, much of Africa has been bound up in perpetual poverty for generations. The massive ongoing migration from the rural areas to the cities has created conditions that have encouraged disease and crime and a loss of traditional values such as honesty, hard work and good neighborliness. The end result is that the vast majority of people have simply eked out an existence and there has been little hope of breaking this cycle of poverty. Though this is oversimplified a bit, the traditional missionary Christianity presented a message that Christians should be willing to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Jesus, who also lived in poverty. However, the new Pentecostals came up with a different message. They took comfort in the words of Jesus that he had come to bring good news to the poor and they did not spiritualize the word "poor." In addition, they discovered the words of 3 John 2 and religiously claimed them: "*Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth*" (KJV). Jesus' promise to provide good things for the poor and this prayer for prosperity encouraged them to search all over the scriptures to find verses that would support the teaching that God wanted his people to live healthy, wholesome and prosperous lives in this world.

This message obviously came as a breath of fresh air to people who had suffered in demeaning poverty for generations. And when these poor people saw their leaders beginning to be lifted out of poverty and, in fact, living in extravagance at times, this gave them hope that they too may one day be lifted out of poverty.

The first question that would come to the mind of a thoughtful person is: Does it work? Were the Pentecostals indeed lifted out of poverty or was this some kind of ecclesiastical Ponzi scheme to provide money to the leaders at the expense of the poor? It is certainly true that the message has not worked as hoped. The average income of those who identify as Pentecostals is not impressive. Over 50 percent of the Pentecostals in Nigeria make less than \$5 per day. Less than 10 percent of Pentecostals could be considered to be in a middle class. The following chart shows the monthly income of Pentecostals.⁶

No	Amount in Naira	Percentage
1.	0 – 9,999	25%
2.	10,000 – 19,999	40%
3.	20,000 – 49,999	25%
4.	50,000 – 99,999	5%
5.	100,000 +	5%

⁶ Korb and Kumswa, *Preliminary Report of Pentecostal Churchgoers in Northern Nigeria*, p. 7. The exchange rate in August 2011 was about 155 Naira to one US dollar.

If the message has not necessarily produced universal wealth for Pentecostal members, why has this message continued to be preached and continued to be popular? Are all of the prosperity preachers really crooks who just manipulate people to get money? There is no doubt that some are indeed crooks, but I do not believe that is the whole answer. At least part of the answer is related to the doctrine of hope that I mentioned earlier. If I am living in oppressive poverty but I have some hope that things might get better, that gives me the courage to continue living and trying to overcome. In addition, when we see people - our people who are indeed enjoying the good life, that provides a kind of vicarious fulfillment. Perhaps I am not prosperous but I can at least see the prosperity has reached some people. All of this produces hope and *"hope does not disappoint us"* (Romans 5:5).

In addition, there has been a slow shift of emphasis in the prosperity message at least in some Pentecostal circles. There has been a shift away from a prosperity based upon divine right and appropriated by personal faith to a prosperity based upon hard work, integrity and faithfulness. Prosperity does not just come to those who have faith; it comes to those who are diligent and those who are smart enough to prepare themselves. Therefore, many of the thoughtful Pentecostal preachers are not just preaching prosperity, they are sponsoring seminars and workshops and writing books that help their people be more marketable and better able to utilize the financial resources that they accumulate.⁷ In other words, these people are not just preaching an optimistic message; they are helping their people to directly confront poverty through old-fashioned work.

The lesson for non-Pentecostal is the issue of relevance. Pentecostal preachers have tackled the issue of poverty head-on. We may not like the way some have attempted to solve it or their theological foundation. However, at least they are doing something. At least they are offering people hope. At least they are addressing the common problems people are facing today. That must be a challenge to all who are in positions of Christian leadership.

3.2 Barrenness

It is unlikely that the western missionaries who planted the church in Africa could fully appreciate the value that Africans place on having children and the great grief and shame that barren women face in Africa. Again, the typical western approach to this would be to provide a theological answer. God is a

⁷ One of the best examples of this is Sam Adeyemi, pastor of the Daystar Christian Centre. One of his books is *The Parable of the Dollars: Proven Strategies for your Financial Success*, Lagos: Pneuma Publishing, 2003. In addition, Adeyemi is the president of *Success Power International*, an organization that sponsors workshops and seminars to help better prepare Christians for the workplace. His website says, "He has the God given mandate to teach scriptural Success, Leadership and Financial principles through seminars and the media."

<http://www.successpower.org/brandnewportal/profile.asp>

sovereign God and can and will give children to whomever he wishes. If a woman is unable to conceive, then she and her husband have to simply accept that as one of the unfortunate facts of life and just live with it. God will give them the necessary grace to endure the grief and shame.

Unfortunately, this answer has not always satisfied African Christians. Many African Christians have either divorced their barren wives or taken a second wife in order to be able to produce children. This reaction was a source of embarrassment and frustration to the missionaries and continues to be a problem for modern African Christian leaders.

When the Pentecostals came along, they were not satisfied with either the theological answer of the missionaries or the compromise of those who reacted in a sinful manner. They attempted to confront this issue directly. Most of the time, Pentecostal and Charismatic pastors have attempted to resolve this issue spiritually, through fasting and prayer and deliverance ceremonies. And there are abundant testimonies of women who have gotten pregnant shortly after these special prayers. Again, the non-Pentecostal may not like the way that this issue has been addressed. However, Pentecostal leaders have attempted to bring the gospel to bear on this important social problem. They have attempted to make the gospel relevant. Other Christian leaders can learn a lesson of relevance from this example.

3.3 Witchcraft

Another major social and cultural problem that has caused much grief in Africa is the issue of witchcraft. This is the attempt to manipulate and take advantage and harm other people using traditional spiritual forces. Many earlier missionaries simply viewed such activities as superstitions that did not fit within a Christian worldview. Therefore, people suffering from supposed witchcraft activity were viewed as either having physical, emotional or psychological problems. Unfortunately, this did not satisfy many African Christians. Even with the best western education, many Africans continue to believe that there are spiritual forces that affect us that must be neutralized.

When Pentecostalism emerged in Nigeria, it brought along a worldview that was very open to the activities of evil spirits and more willing to view such problems as spiritual and not just physical or emotional or psychological. In light of the fact that Jesus spent a good bit of time casting out demons and there often was an overlap between physical sickness and demon possession in the accounts of his healings, many Pentecostal Christian leaders have developed deliverance ministries to “*release the oppressed*” among their people.

Whether or not the Pentecostals have gotten their theology right or not on this issue, they have not ignored the problem; they have indeed attempted to address a perceived problem with a Biblical answer. And, once again, the time and attention devoted to this problem is another example of being relevant in

society. This issue like those mentioned earlier is an example of the holistic nature of Pentecostal faith and their willingness to tackle any problem with the optimistic conviction that it can be solved.

4. Revival

Perhaps the single most important thing that Pentecostalism has done for the body of Christ in Nigeria has been to bring more energy and spiritual life back to the church. One of the early accusations against the mainstream churches by those who came to Christ in the seventies was that the church was “dead.” The church was carrying on with the doctrines and ceremonies and rituals of the church. There was a good bit of discipline and loyalty in that people were attending church. Church members were even willing to give enough money to build church buildings and keep the activities of the church running. However, the real heart of the faith was often missing. This opened the way for the “born again” movement. Those who were born again experienced a personal encounter with Christ and this changed their lives and gave them a level of commitment and joy that they had not experienced before.

This renewal movement manifested itself in several ways. We have already talked about a fresh way of worshipping that was more meaningful. In addition, there was a new emphasis on prayer. Churches started having prayer meetings and night vigils that were meaningful and fulfilling. Families started praying together. The church began to see she could influence the direction of their communities and nation through prayer. Though it is impossible to prove, many Christians firmly believe the demise of the former Nigerian head of state, Sani Abacha, was a direct result of the fervent and persistent prayers of God’s people. Bible studies became important. W.F. Kumuyi encouraged a phenomenon when he created a Bible study movement on university campuses that involved thousands of youth. Kumuyi’s efforts spilled over into other campus ministries so there are now hundreds of thousands of students engaged in Bible studies on Nigerian tertiary campuses at the present time. The engagement in evangelism and other forms of outreach have taken a positive turn since the onset of Pentecostalism. Out of the one hundred and ten member organizations in the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association, well over half of those ministries are Pentecostal.

Although scholars may argue about the exact cause of this, it is interesting that the steady growth of evangelicalism within the Anglican Church over the last 30 years is parallel with the growth of Pentecostalism. Anglican churches, while preserving their ritual and ceremony, have become much more alive and much more engaged in evangelism than before. To what extent Pentecostalism has contributed to this I do not know, but it is certainly worthy of note that it has been happening at the same time the influence of Pentecostalism has grown.

5. Summary

Any objective observer would have to say that Pentecostalism has had an impact upon the church in Nigeria and much of it has been positive. Obviously there is still disagreement over theological issues and skepticism about some practices that appear to be strange within the church, and there is still a bit of underlying resentment over church members who have left their churches for Pentecostal churches. However, there is less suspicion and resentment and, in fact, a growing respect and appreciation for each other. The mainstream churches must continue to interact with and study the Pentecostal churches around them to see what good things they can learn and incorporate into their churches. To fail to do so would be irresponsible. To reach out to these brothers, many of whom have left the mainstream churches, would be an act of love and unity that may someday fulfill Jesus' last prayer that his disciples would be one (John 17:11, 21, 22).

What Can Pentecostals Learn from Non-Pentecostals?

Although we are grateful for the movement of Pentecostalism that has contributed much to the body of Christ as a whole, Pentecostalism has not arrived at the finish line yet. Pentecostalism is strong in Nigeria but it is still young in many ways and there are many things that this movement can learn from the mother church. Although the mainstream churches may be tired and weak in some areas, there are still many things that the mainstream body of Christ can teach those who are part of this more recent movement.

The writer of Hebrews says, *"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith"* (Hebrews 13:7). By leaders here I think the writer included those Christians that were in the faith before them and who brought them up in the faith. Pentecostal leaders must not abandon those positive things that were part of the church before Pentecostalism and are still part of mainstream Christianity. Though there are others, I will focus only on three specific issues.

1. Biblical Authority

Nearly all Pentecostals have a high view of scripture. They believe that the Bible is inspired and inerrant in the original autographs. As such they stand within the tradition of theological orthodoxy. However, there are some things within Pentecostalism or associated with Pentecostalism that tend to weaken its commitment to Biblical authority. The following are three of them.

1.1 Leadership Infallibility

There are literally hundreds of Pentecostals churches and denominations that are led by founder/presidents. The founders of these churches naturally place their own stamp upon the ministry they create. And because of their charismatic leadership style, coupled with the traditional respect for elders within the society, there is a tendency to blindly follow the leader and accept his word as final. It would be almost unheard of to challenge or even disagree

with the leader of an organization. This places enormous and unnatural responsibility and expectations upon leaders and puts the members of the congregation in a position of finding it difficult to do independent thinking.

One of the key issues the reformers stressed, which had been completely neglected by the Catholic Church of that day, was the priesthood of the believer and the related doctrine known as perspicuity of scriptures (the Bible can be understood by the common person). These doctrines taught that average Christian laypeople could understand the scriptures clearly, and that one could go directly to God without the aid of a priest. This is a very high, and in my opinion correct, view of humanity. This view of humanity's relationship with God is what enabled Paul, who was younger and newer in the faith, to stand up to Peter and correct him when he refused to eat with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-13).

In light of this doctrine, Pentecostal leaders must not perpetuate the myth that they are infallible. They must encourage their followers to make the Bible the final authority and they themselves must be willing to submit to the authority of Scripture when it is clearly explained to them, even by a subordinate. They must not be so intimidated or insecure that they refuse to allow divergent opinions within their subordinates. They want to have leaders under them who are reading the Bible also and who are not afraid to speak up when they believe someone is misunderstanding or misrepresenting the Scriptures. Pentecostal leaders must make sure that they are reading the Bible more than they are reading fellow Pentecostal writers, and that they are developing their theology based upon the Bible and not upon peer pressure. Leaders have enormous influence and authority, but they also run enormous risks of misleading people. Therefore, they must publicly and personally make sure that they are submitted to the authority of God's Word.

1.2 Spontaneous Prophecy

One of the common practices within Nigerian Pentecostalism is prophecy. This is a practice whereby a person, often a person in the congregation, receives a special message from God and stands up and gives that message publicly to the rest of the congregation. Normally, the prophecy is in the first person, as if God himself were speaking through the person. It will sometimes begin with words like, "O my people, O my people, Listen to me. I am coming soon ..." and then specific exhortations are given that encourage the congregation or certain individuals or groups within the congregation to do specific things.

Certainly, God can continue to speak through his people today and he can use any means that he chooses. However, if God himself has chosen to come down out of heaven and speak through that person, then that is a very sober occasion, not less serious than God coming down and meeting Moses on the mountain (Exodus 19:3ff.). Such a divine visitation also places upon that church a very serious responsibility, again not less than the responsibility that

was placed upon Israel who received the message of God through Moses. I am afraid that most Pentecostal churches or leaders do not have that understanding of the significance of God speaking to them through what is understood as modern prophecy. On the other hand, if God has not spoken through that person, and he or she has just stood up and made comments similar to what he or she has heard others make, that is also a very serious situation. That person has been guilty of trying to impersonate God and is a false prophet. This would seem to me to be no less serious than the “strange fire” that was offered by Nadab and Abihu (Numbers 3:4). Pentecostal pastors must guard their congregations very carefully from those who would attempt to represent God, even if they are doing so innocently.

Perhaps the most serious problem with the frequent use of prophecy in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is that it tends to weaken the authority of the Word of God. We Christians have always believed that the Bible is a complete revelation and there is nothing new that needs to be added to it and there is no general problem that a person could face that is not addressed at least in principle by the Bible. However, who needs the Bible if God is going to come to church every week and tell people what to do? The Bible was given as a written revelation because divine revelation was not a common occurrence even during the time of the Bible. Therefore, we should be seeking for divine wisdom and guidance primarily from the Bible and not from those who purport to be speaking on behalf of God.

It appears that God has given to certain people the gift of a sensitive spirit. That person has the spirit of discernment. Such persons are able to sense things in the spirit world better than most people. They can often hear the voice or at least detect the will of God in a certain situation and when they do discern such things, they have a responsibility to share those in an appropriate way with God’s people. We should respect and appreciate such people. However, we must always remember that even such people are fallible. A person with the gift of evangelism does not successfully lead every person to Christ he or she meets. A person with the gift of healing does not heal everyone he prays for. And a person with the gift of discernment does not always interpret the message of God perfectly every time.

In light of that, we must be very careful to make the Word of God the highest authority in our lives, our ministries and our churches.

1.3 Superficial Exegesis

One of the most common criticisms of Pentecostals, even from within their own ranks, is that though they have great personal faith they tend to have a limited understanding of the correct way to interpret the Bible and to develop theology. In the early days of the post Civil War revival, the university students and graduates had a negative attitude toward seminary education. They felt that the seminaries were more like cemeteries and contributed to the deadness of the church. Therefore, the kind of things that were studied in the

seminary was not appealing to these early firebrand type evangelists. The leaders of this movement frequently reasoned that the level of study that they had in Scripture Union and other Bible studies was all that they needed to build God's kingdom on earth. This led to not only a neglect of theological studies, but also a negative attitude toward the study of theology and the discouraging of their members from pursuing a theological education.⁸

I have been teaching Pentecostal students for the past 23 years. I currently teach on an adjunct basis at West Africa Theological Seminary, Lagos (WATS) and Evangel Theological Seminary, Jos (ETS), both of whom enroll primarily Pentecostal students. I have found them to be very eager students and often very good students but as a general rule, I have found them to have less general knowledge about theology and hermeneutics, in particular, than their counterparts in the mainstream churches. Fortunately, this is slowly changing.

Because of this limitation, there is a tendency within Pentecostal churches to preach textual sermons in which the preacher focuses on just one phrase of Scripture. There is also a tendency to preach allegorical type sermons based upon the stories in the Bible in which the parts of the story generate multiple points of application. Both of these practices make good communication devices but tend to ignore the big picture presented in the Bible and tend to read into the passages what one wants them to say rather than extracting from them what is actually there. There is also a tendency within Pentecostal circles to overuse the King James Bible by building doctrine out of old English phrases that do not now mean what they did 400 years ago.

Theological beliefs and ecclesiastical practices must be based upon solid exegesis that extracts from a text of Scripture the communication that was intended by the original writer. The principles of hermeneutics are well worked out and are fairly straightforward. Mainstream seminaries have people in them who have faithfully and carefully taught exegesis and theology for many years. Therefore, Pentecostal leaders would do well to send their pastors and church workers to some of these mainline denominational seminaries for training. I

⁸ My personal encounter with this philosophy of theological education revolved around one of my students, Leo Bawa, who came to a university programme I had started. He was a missionary with Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and introduced me to it. In my subsequent interaction with their leaders, I learned of the typical negative attitudes toward seminary education. This is illustrated in the fact that in 1992 the CAPRO School of Missions at Gana Ropp in Plateau State did not have a single course in hermeneutics, theology, church history or the Bible in their one year preparation course for missions. After some urging, to their credit, the leadership of CAPRO eventually added theological courses so that now students at Gana Ropp spend several months studying the Bible and theology. This attitude is slowly changing but there are still many Pentecostal leaders who believe that a year or two of Bible study is all that one needs to be successful in his or her ministry.

am grateful that many Pentecostal denominations are doing exactly that, and I am equally grateful that most mainstream seminaries welcome Pentecostal students. Pentecostal leaders would also help themselves and their ministries by critiquing and correcting one another when one strays too far from proper hermeneutic rules or comes up with interpretations that are strange and indefensible.

There is no greater authority in Christianity than the Bible. Our Pentecostal brothers must make sure that they give to the study and interpretation of the Bible the same degree of loyalty and professionalism that they profess to have by recognizing it as the divine Word of God. To fail to do so leaves persons on a sea of subjectivity and personal opinion. Such a foundation will not sustain the future of any church or organization. It is truth that sets us free. The primary source of truth for the Christian believer is the Bible. However, that truth will remain locked up in the Bible until one learns how to properly extract it. This is what our Pentecostal brothers must be encouraged and aided to do.

2. Organizational Integrity

Thousands of Pentecostals organizations have been created in Nigeria in the last 40 years. Most of them follow sound organizational principles and function well. And, in fact, many of these Pentecostal leaders have used their secular training to create outstanding organizations that are models for any church or denomination to emulate. However, there are things that the mainstream churches have learned over hundreds of years of ministry that the younger Pentecostal churches would do well to observe and learn from. I will mention only three specific issues.

2.1 Leadership Diversity

Because most organizations start very small, with a visionary leader, the common practice in the early days is for the leader to control everything about the church. That works fine as long as there is just one small congregation. However, having that kind of control does not work very well when the organization grows. The leader has to grow with the organization and a part of his growth is the appointing of officers or creating of departments that can deal with various issues. The apostles learned this lesson fairly quickly. They had assumed responsibility for the distribution of the food to the widows but soon realized that their many other duties had kept them from doing this job effectively. Therefore, they got others involved in this particular ministry of the church (Acts 6:1-6).

I have personally served as an educational consultant to one of the main Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. We developed a good plan for training pastors and church leaders. However, our plan never really materialized because the leader had to make every decision related to this school himself. Because he was so busy and could not give the attention that was needed to the school and was not willing to delegate that responsibility to others, the project suffered.

In addition to the inability to delegate authority, some church leaders have had unfortunate experiences with some of their junior leaders who had tried to appropriate too much responsibility and, in some cases, tried to dethrone the person at the top. Therefore, some Pentecostal leaders do not want to give their subordinates too much responsibility. They move them around from place to place so that they will not gain too much loyalty in any one place. This is not a good way to build or lead an organization. No person is indispensable, including the person at the top.

One of the most amazing positive illustrations of leadership reorganization occurred on the first missionary journey. The Lord spoke to the church and told them to set apart *“Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”* (Acts 13:2). A short time after that *“Barnabas and Saul”* arrived in Cyprus where they began their ministry. However, an interesting thing happened to the ministry team on the island. We read that *“Paul and his companions”* departed from the island and every time thereafter except one, the missionary team is referred to as *“Paul and Barnabas.”* What happened on the island of Cyprus? Barnabas recognized that Paul had better gifts to lead an evangelistic team and therefore, he voluntarily stepped aside to allow Paul to take over the leadership of the evangelistic team. This is a good model for all leaders to note and imitate. When we find someone who is more gifted than we are in doing a specific thing, we must be willing to yield over that responsibility to that person.

Most mainline churches have existed a long time and have developed organizational structures that do not overwork the top person and help to build up and prepare junior leaders for advanced leadership roles. I urge Pentecostal leaders, particularly the founder/presidents of various ministries to learn a lesson from the churches from which they came. No person, no matter how gifted he or she is, can do all the work or have all the responsibility. And even if they could, there is safety in the *“multitude of counselors”* (Proverbs 11:14). Therefore, the leader must learn to train junior leaders and delegate real responsibility to them.

2.2 Financial Accountability

One of the specific areas where leaders tend to maintain too much control and even ownership is the finances of their ministries. Some Pentecostal leaders (and non-Pentecostal leaders as well) view their church as a business, and the offerings and other income are the profit on the investment they have made in the church planting industry. Obviously, this is an extreme position. More common is the practice of the leader controlling all of the money and distributing it as he or she sees fit.

There are very few things that can undermine a leader's authority quicker than poor stewardship of financial resources. This was one of the things that led to the undoing of Judas (John 12:6). When Paul took up money from the churches in Macedonian and Achaia, he was so committed to transparency

that he spent extra money to take representatives from those places with him to Jerusalem so that they could see that the money went to those for whom it was collected (Acts 20:4-5). Paul declared that the love of money is the *“root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10a). He followed up that statement by saying *“Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”* (6:10b). The writer of Hebrews made a similar comment: *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have ...”* (13:5). Although all human beings are subject to temptations about money and material things, those who often preach on prosperity are even more vulnerable to such temptations - to take advantage of their position as leaders to help God answer their prayers for financial prosperity.

Older churches and organization have worked with finances for centuries and have several simple common sense principles to teach younger Pentecostal churches. First, for accountability, there needs to be several people involved in the financial part of the church. Multiple people encourage accountability and accountability encourages honesty and efficiency. Second, mainstream churches have learned the value of creating specialists in dealing with certain jobs. Most pastors are not accountants. Therefore, they must be willing to turn over the management and accounting of money to those who have been called and trained to do this. Third, as an organization grows, it needs to learn to function on a budget that is a spending plan that becomes the legal disbursement guide for the organization. When a church or other organization has an approved budget, it releases the person at the top from the responsibility of having to approve every expenditure. Mainstream churches have learned a lot about financial accountability. Our Pentecostal brothers would do well to learn from them.

2.3 Succession Methodology

One of the most serious administrative flaws that I see developing in some of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches is little or no succession planning. What will happen to the church when the founder goes to be with the Lord? Already several major Pentecostal leaders have died what many would consider premature deaths. For example, Archbishop Benson Idahosa, often considered the father of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the founding president of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) and unquestionably the most popular Pentecostal leader in Africa in his day, died at the age of 59. I think it is fair to say that his church, the Church of God, Mission, was not prepared for his departure and the lack of a clear succession plan created serious problems for the church. Many other top Pentecostal leaders who were founders of their organizations are well above that age and are all facing the end of their ministries in the next few years. The organizations that God has given to Pentecostal leaders are gifts from God and must be treated like any other asset. They must not be weakened by failure to prepare for the founder's

departure. Hence it is a duty for all Pentecostal leaders to make adequate preparation for the time when they may no longer be able to lead the ministry.

Most mainstream churches have existed through many generations and have worked out the succession issues quite well. If the Anglican prelate or moderator of the Presbyterian Church or the president of the Nigerian Baptist Convention dies in office, it would be a painful thing for that organization but there are structures in place that would guide the organization in what to do next. I am afraid that many Pentecostal churches do not have such structures in place and should their leader pass away in the near future, they would leave their churches in a vulnerable position that could be devastating if not fatal. Pentecostal churches do not necessarily have to follow the exact patterns of succession that mainstream churches have used. However, they should develop some professionally recognized and legal succession plan so that their ministries will not be disrupted by the death of a founder.

3. Personal Humility

Unfortunately, many people outside the Pentecostal movement believe Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders represent a growing personality cult that displays pride and arrogance and sometimes makes leaders look foolish. Obviously there are remarkable exceptions in people like William Kumuyi and Gbile Akanne, both of whom are the epitome of humility. The Old Testament is filled with warnings about pride. Jesus came into this world as the only person who had a legitimate right to be proud, and yet he is described as being “*gentle and humble in heart*” (Matthew 11:29). Throughout the epistles, we are warned against pride and encouraged to develop a humble attitude.

Although we must not have a judgmental spirit and we must grant people the freedom to express their personalities in ways that we might not be able to, I fear that many Pentecostal leaders have exceeded the freedom that should be given to them and have indeed become guilty of pride. Note these three examples of different aspects of the sin of pride.

3.1 Superiority Attitudes

Because Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders have often re-discovered something in the Bible that had been overlooked by others, this sometimes causes them to think that they are more clever or better able to interpret the Bible or have more knowledge about God’s ways than others. Such leaders often teach with dogmatic certainty the meaning and application of certain passages that have been debated for centuries by the best scholars. They may demonstrate arrogance when it comes to interpreting the Scriptures. As a general rule, education tends to open one’s eyes to the vast knowledge available. Therefore, dogmatism and inflexibility are often the first marks of ignorance and are certainly indicators of intellectual pride. Pentecostal leaders would do well to realize that God has been and is still working through many people in this world. Therefore, they should respect those who have gone before them and those who are coming after them.

3.2 Extravagant Lifestyles

Some parts of Pentecostalism have developed the “king’s kid” philosophy - “I am the son of a king. Therefore, I should live like it.” This thinking has often led to an ostentatious display of wealth that is viewed by some Pentecostals as a demonstration of faith. The few Pentecostal leaders who have become prosperous sometimes have fallen into the trap of living an extravagant and pompous lifestyle. One of the attractions of wealth is that it feeds one’s pride and gives to people an elevated sense of importance. The expensive vehicles and expensive clothes and the public display of wealth and position are evidences of this. Some Pentecostal leaders have developed almost a rock-star image, only appearing with robust bodyguards and having little time for the common people. The imitation of the wealthy and affluent in life often makes these religious leaders look foolish. I once saw a Pentecostal preacher, who had come to see my neighbor, struggle to get into the back right seat of his vehicle. This man knew where the owner’s seat was but as a very fat man he had to seriously struggle to get into the back of his Volkswagen Beetle.⁹

3.3 Acquisition of Titles

Titles have been important to Africans throughout history. Titles were given to individuals when they reached certain stages in life or had achieved certain accomplishments. The society set title-holders apart from ordinary people. Today, we have continued to perpetuate the use of titles. Some Pentecostals have borrowed ecclesiastical titles from mainstream churches and demand to be addressed as “Bishop” or “Archbishop.” Some have gone back to the Bible and used titles that mainstream churches have abandoned because of certain theological implications. These include “apostle” and “prophet.”¹⁰ In addition, in some circles there is a craving for educational titles. Many Pentecostals leaders have either gotten honorary doctorate degrees or degrees from some non-accredited diploma mill so they can be addressed as “Rev. Doctor” or even “Rev. Professor.” There is nothing improper about giving a person the respect that he or she has earned. It is a Biblical concept (Rom 13:7; Eph 6:2; Phil 2:29; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Peter 2:17). But using titles that one has not earned is not only a mark of pride but also a compromise of integrity.

Mainline Christian leaders are not exempt from pride, but the long process of becoming an Anglican or ECWA church leader encourages a dignity, humility and professionalism that Pentecostals would do well to emulate.

⁹ I once participated in a thanksgiving service where a Pentecostal preacher was asked to speak. He arrived late, pulled up right to the front of the hall and with great fanfare and obvious pride, got out and made his way to the platform. This young pastor, who probably did not have 100 members in his congregation, had his own personal ADC who stood up and sat down at the appropriate point behind him during the programme.

¹⁰ I have no personal objection to using either the ecclesiastical titles or the Biblical titles but I am concerned when these are used merely as a demonstration of pride.

Conclusion

In Khartoum there are two mighty rivers that join together - the White and Blue Nile. The White Nile is more of a chocolate color and the Blue Nile has clearer water. In Khartoum you can easily see where the two join. It seems that for a long distance, the two rivers run side by side. Eventually a section of chocolate water bubbles up on the clear side of the river, and then another one. After a while, the distinctions between the two bodies of water are only at the extreme edges because the middle of the river is mixed. After a few more kilometers, the whole river looks the same. There is no longer the Blue Nile and the White Nile. There is just the Nile River and it continues to flow like that all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.

The river of Christianity has been flowing down through history for two thousand years. Various streams of theology and ecclesiastical practice have entered the body and have left their mark. As I have demonstrated, in the last hundred years three significant streams have entered this river of Christianity in Nigeria. They have been flowing side by side for a long time. However, we are already beginning to see bubbles of Pentecostalism and charismatic manifestations springing up in the mainline churches. We are also seeing the titles and vestments of the mainstreams surfacing in the Pentecostal churches. And in some places the lines between the new and the old have become pretty blurred. Whether we like it or not, the river of Christianity is adapting and absorbing all those who claim to be followers of Jesus and each of these is making a small impact on the body as a whole.

It is my prayer that those doctrines and practices of Pentecostalism that bubble up on the non-Pentecostal side of the river will be the parts of the movement that make Christianity stronger and better. It is also my prayer that when the lines further blur between the two streams of Christianity, those precious traditions and valuable practices that the mainstream body has preserved will not be ignored by the new movement called Pentecostalism. When we borrow from each other and we learn from each other and we interact with each other and we challenge each other and we love each other, we believe that soon the whole body of Christ will become “*a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*” (Eph. 5:27).

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Book Reviews

Carolyn Custis James

Half the Church:

Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010, 206 pages, hb

ISBN 978-0-310-32556-7 \$13.86 US at Amazon.com

Reviewed by Theodore B. Witmer, Shalom University, Bunia, DRC

Carolyn James has written a passionate plea for men and women to take to heart the creation truths that we are all bearers of God's image and we all are under the creation mandate to be fruitful, multiply, fill and subdue the earth (p. 50). Thus women have the same responsibility as men to accomplish God's mission in the world.

She is very concerned for the horrible situation that many women face especially in the developing world: suffering, exploitation, prostitution, repression, selective abortion of unborn females,¹ bride immolation and more. This drives her to emphasize that women (especially from the West) who might empathize more with suffering women should not hesitate to get involved in addressing their plight. In fact, she emphasizes that all women should be involved, not just a few (p. 81). She shows that the situation today is just as bad if not worse (certainly the numbers are much greater) than when Amy Carmichael tried to publicize the plight of temple prostitute girls in India 100 years ago, but many people remain insensitive to today's injustices just as Carmichael found. The recent book *Half the Sky*² provides lots of material to raise the awareness of women's abuse and the injustices they face.

James argues that Christian women are especially suited to address the needs of women worldwide. She provides many examples of women in the Bible who undertook amazing exploits for God. She provides exegetical insight into the Hebrew term *ezer* (KJV "helpmeet") which is in fact mostly used in the OT (16 times) to describe God as a strong helper of Israel to protect the nation. Thus she envisions women as *ezer-warriors* (p. 113) who should be engaged in global mission with all their energy along with men. She cogently observes that men and women are somehow uncomfortable with

¹ Christophe Guilmoto puts the number of female infants aborted or killed in Asia at 163 million, equal to the total female population of the United States. In Marian V. Liautaud, "Genocide in Shades of Pink," *Christianity Today* (December 2012).
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/december/genocide-in-shades-of-pink.html>

² Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheyl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, New York: Vintage Books, Random House Inc., 2009.

each other and often end up working separately, but in fact since the Scriptures use the term *ezer*, there should be a very close male/female relationship that parallels the closeness of the trinity in the pluri-unity of humanity even apart from marriage. Secular research supports that when women are closely involved with men in undertakings, the outcomes are better (p. 117). Rather than a battle of the sexes both in and outside of the Church, Christians of both genders need to get on with facing the world and its problems together.

In an interesting discussion, James points out that in fact most women (60%) are not married (p. 102 ff.). Even those who do get married are only married and caring for children for less than half of their lives. While she does not want to devalue in any way the blessing of marriage and children, she asserts that the ideal classically held up for Christian women of being stay-at-home moms is inadequate to give the majority of women purpose for life when unmarried, widows or empty nesters. [And what of women in poverty who have no option but to work hard outside the home (p. 36)?] The homemaker ideal is not consistent with the value of singleness endorsed by Jesus and Paul, not as an unfortunate state, but as “kingdom strategy” (p. 69). Since Jesus himself was single, we should not imagine that the “not good” of being alone in Genesis 2 means that marriage is a necessary state. Not being alone can be achieved without marriage by living productive lives as God’s image bearers in relationship with other men and women (contrary to the hermit model of spirituality of the middle ages). Rather than marriage and motherhood as the Church’s primary message to women, creation gives a greater calling that can include all women at all stages of life, the calling to bear God’s image in the world, kingdom builders who are out to subdue the Enemy (p. 76). While it was the man who was “alone” in Genesis, the Church today does not promote men getting married as their highest calling in life. Why does it seem to do so for women (p. 107-108)?

In the last chapter of the book (chapter 8) James addresses the issue of egalitarian versus complementarian views of women’s roles. Egalitarians maintain that the Bible does not teach that men and women should occupy different roles in the church whereas complementarians teach that the Bible does teach gender-differentiated roles in the church. She points out that the theological issues and Biblical texts are so difficult that good scholarly evangelicals continue to disagree. While she respects the two viewpoints and accepts that different churches and individuals will have different points of view, she refuses to take up this debate by expressing an opinion. Instead she laments how the theological disagreement has sidetracked our attention away from the clear creation passages, and thus from getting on with the huge tasks that confront the Church and which women, as half the Church, need to be engaged in for the glory of God. Rather than debating who is “in charge” (Lk. 9:46; Mt. 20:26), Jesus exhorts His followers to serve others (p. 166-170). We all have talents that need to be used effectively, and if half the Church is

not using or is under-utilizing (burying) these talents, we are engaged in a terrible waste that will be judged by the Lord. She calls for a “blessed alliance” of men and women to go out and confront the injustice that is prevalent in the world (p. 184) with a unity that mirrors the unity of the trinity. This would then be an effective and tremendous testimony to the glory of God (cf. p. 76). Men and women should all be serving, not worrying about who is in charge.

James has written a thoughtful call to action on behalf of women who are hurting and need the concerted effort of men and women working together to bring the solutions of a holistic Gospel. I would recommend reading it as a challenge to see how we can be more effective in confronting the injustices that are all around us, especially in Africa.

Derek and Diane Tidball

The Message of Women: Creation, Grace and Gender

Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012
£11.99, 304 pages, ISBN: 978-1-84474-595-1

Reviewed by Georgette Short, Scott Christian University

Discussions concerning women in the home and the church are still, perhaps surprisingly, prevalent in theological circles today. The rejection of the appointment of women bishops in the Anglican communion last year brought this issue very much into the public domain and demonstrated to those both inside and outside the church, just how divided Christians are on this matter. Because the debate is largely centred on the place of women in the church and in particular whether they should take a leadership role, many scholars have concentrated their efforts in this direction with both the complementarian and the egalitarian perspectives represented. Derek and Diane Tidball do not limit themselves in this way but instead take a comprehensive view of how women are portrayed in the Bible. Rather than simply concentrating on one of the issues in the Bible concerning women, the Tidballs take a canonical approach and build up a complete picture of what the Bible says about women.

The book begins with an exploration of the foundations of the Bible's view of women. This section examines the creation of humankind and discusses how the Bible views the creation of Eve as well as the part she played in the Fall. It then goes on to show the effect the new creation has on women. The next part of the book examines how women were portrayed under the Old Covenant. This section shows the variety of ways women are seen in the Old Testament, within the family, as leaders, and as victims, for example. The authors then go on to look at how women are seen within the kingdom and the part they played in Jesus' ministry, ending with how women are viewed in the new community, where they are seen taking up a wide variety of roles.

The Tidballs take an expository approach to the subject of women in the Bible, in line with the purpose of *The Bible Speaks Today* series of which this book is a part. They examine the text carefully and humbly, wrestling with what the Bible says in order to understand its message and, in so doing, making the message relevant for us today.

The authors show an awareness of the complexity of the Bible's view of women, and therefore present an intricate picture of what the Bible says about them. They avoid drawing simplistic conclusions and are willing to grapple with the text in order to gain a better understanding. Although they make the

message of the Bible very relevant for today, they also take seriously the culture in which the texts first came into being so that they differentiate clearly what in the text is cultural and what is for all time. This is crucial when discussing women when so much has changed in their roles and opportunities since the Bible was written, and yet much that the Bible says about them is timeless.

The Tidballs see the Bible as presenting a positive view of women, which is not always the case with those who adopt an egalitarian position. They see the Bible as affirming of women and, using the examples of women such as Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, demonstrate that God often used women at critical points in Israel's history. However, they are not afraid of tackling the so-called 'texts of terror'¹ in which women are victims of the male cruelty. Nor are the authors afraid to face head on the passages in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy, which are the subject of much debate in the church. Their approach is to examine the text rather than debating the issue with those who might take another view.

As well as dealing with the texts related to women in a thorough and comprehensive manner, this book also explores the implications these passages have for women today and demonstrates to the reader that these women of old have much that is valuable to say to the contemporary church. It challenges some stereotypes and widely held views on the place of women in church and society.

The Study Guide at the end of the book asks searching questions related to each section and would be useful for individuals or groups to look into the subject further.

This book is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the biblical view of women. In not limiting itself to only one of the issues concerning women, it helps us to understand all that the Bible says about women and therefore takes a more balanced approach. In placing what different parts of the Bible say about women alongside each other, they build up a picture of women that is both affirming and challenging for Christian women in the world today as they seek to live out their faith, and also present a biblical picture of women that informs the whole church.

¹ Phillis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (London SCM, 1984).

Books Received

1. Stan Chu Ilo, Joseph Ogbonnaya, Alex Ojacor, eds.
The Church as Salt and Light: The Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life
Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012. pb. 170 pages
The book is written from a Roman Catholic perspective.
2. Steven Paas
Christian Zionism Examined: A Review of Ideas on Israel, the Church and the Kingdom
Nurnberg: VTR Publications and Hamburg: RVB, 2012, pb. 135 pages
3. Michael P. Jensen, ed.
True Feelings: Perspectives on Emotions in Christian Life and Ministry
Nottingham: Apollos (IVP), 2012. pb. 284 pages
4. Rob Lister
God is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion
Nottingham: Apollos (IVP), 2012. pb. 333 pages
5. Andrew G. Shead
A Mouth Full of Fire: The Word of God in the Words of Jeremiah
(NSBT) New Studies in Biblical Theology 29
Nottingham: Apollos (IVP), 2012. pb. 321 pages
6. D.A. Carson
Jesus the Son of God: A Christological Title Often Overlooked, Sometimes Misunderstood, and Currently Disputed
Nottingham: IVP (Crossway), 2012. pb. 117 pages

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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