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Cover: The emblem of Scott Theological College, shown on the cover, features the Mumbu Tree, a historic and cultural landmark on the College grounds. The Mumbu Tree is used by *AJET* as a symbol of the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the Mumbu Tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

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THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL

An AJET Editorial

Recently the Editor visited a large, prospering church in one of the capital cities of Africa. This growing church of 6,000 members attracts Members of Parliament, bank managers and accountants, headmasters of secondary schools and thousands of youth.

That morning the pastor preached the Prosperity Gospel based on 1 Kings 17. The poor widow of Zarephath, about to eat her last remaining food before imminent starvation, was asked by the prophet Elijah to feed him first. When that poor widow in faith obeyed the prophet, God richly blessed her and saved her life with a jug of oil that never ran dry until the rains began to fall. Indeed, there was much truth in what this pastor preached – the need for faith and sacrificial giving by the poor who will then experience God's blessing and favour.

But heresy is never total error, rather a mixture of truth and error, an unbalanced emphasis and distortion of the truth. Though the advocates of the Prosperity Gospel may quote Scripture, they never balance these isolated Scripture references with the full teaching of Scripture on poverty and wealth. Upon reflection we suggest that there are four serious errors in the Prosperity Gospel.

1. *The Prosperity Gospel distorts the true purpose of giving.* Offerings should be given to God as an act of worship (Isa 43:22-24; Ps 116:12-17) and not for selfish gain. It is biblical truth that God promises to reward those who give to him generously (2 Cor 9:6-11). But the divine blessings reflect the gracious gift of God and not God's obligation of favour. The desire for prosperity must never be the motive of giving. Before one gives material gifts, he should first give himself to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5; Rom. 12:1). God is more concerned with the giver than the gift. Though generous giving is a virtue in Scripture (2 Cor 8:1,2), one should give unto the Lord as an offering of thanksgiving (Ps 116:17). Never should one give with selfish ambition of material prosperity.

2. *The Prosperity Gospel distorts the biblical view of true prosperity.* Unfortunately, the preachers of the Prosperity Gospel have bought into the materialistic philosophy of this age, the belief that material prosperity is gain. It is a gospel shaped by the materialism of our contemporary culture. Biblical teaching is clear. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap...For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:6-10). In contrast to material prosperity, true prosperity in God's sight is the riches of faith. "...God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom..." (James 2:5).

3. *The Prosperity Gospel victimises the poor.* Since preachers reduce God's blessings to material gain, anyone who falls into financially hard times must be guilty of sin or unbelief. If God's will is for everyone to be healthy and wealthy, then anyone who falls sick or remains poor is suffering from his own unbelief or disobedience. This places a terrible burden on the poor for it is unfair and unbiblical.

4. *The Prosperity Gospel distorts God's providential plan for his children.* Let us be honest. If we had our own choice, most of us would desire perfect health, long life, material prosperity and influential positions in the church and nation. Such desires are natural because our sinful human nature seeks our own personal gain, prominence and success. But God's plan is for his children to grow in grace. The proud, self centred human nature must be crucified and in God's providential plan this often entails trials of many kinds. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (Ja 1:2-4).

What is urgently needed today is not the Prosperity Gospel but a biblical theology of poverty and riches. This issue of AJET makes a contribution to this urgent task for biblical and theological scholars.

POVERTY: GOOD NEWS FOR AFRICA

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop

The Christian Church in Africa is rapidly growing in an environment of abject poverty among the masses. Christian theology in Africa, if it is worth anything, must address itself to this deep, festering sore which plagues not only African societies but African churches. We need to develop a theology of poverty and riches, a theology that teaches God's will for his people in societies where poverty is all pervasive.

Truly, Africa's hope is in the Christian Church. Dr. Samuel Kunhiyop is among those evangelical pioneers who are reflecting on poverty with a biblical world view. The following paper by Dr. Samuel Kunhiyop was originally presented at the Seminar on "Christian Witness in the Public Arena" which was organised by the Institute for Christian Impact, held in Kampala, Uganda, on May 23-27, 1999.

INTRODUCTION

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because
He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor (Isa. 61:1).*

"We are very, very, very poor" said one Harber Sabane, an elected mayor of Timbuktu, Mali, a few years ago (*Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1995). This description of one of Africa's oldest cities could as well portray the reality of the whole African continent. As a matter of fact, according to the 1997 *World*

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Indicators, the five poorest countries in the world are Niger, Madagascar, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Zambia, all of which are located in Africa. During the last decade the quality of life for most Africans has been steadily but surely eroding. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Africa is the only part of the developing world where living standards have fallen over the past decade". For example, the Economic Intelligence Unit noted that in Nigeria 41.8% of the population were poor in 1992, 46.3% in 1996, but 65% of the Nigerian population are poor as of 1999. This is based on \$1 per household per day. Life expectancy is now at 54 years, infant mortality at 77 per 1,000 births, the child malnutrition rate is 35% for children under five, only 43% of the population had access to safe water, and 43% of the population is illiterate. Poverty manifests itself in many ways such as "prostitution, exposure to risks, corruption, robbery, street life, increased unemployment, living in squalor, shanties, shackles, high infant mortality, acute malnutrition, short life expectancy, human degradation, living in overcrowded and often poorly ventilated homes etc." (Nigerian Human Development Report, 1996:31).

I am sure most other African countries can sing the same song. From the tip of the horn of Africa to Namibia, poverty pervasively dominates the African continent. On television the viewer is bombarded with pictures of weak, hungry and emaciated human beings all over the continent. In the streets of most of our cities, one sees beggars roaming, begging for coins in order to feed their families and their stomachs. What should the Christian do in light of these grim statistics? Is there good news for the poor in the African continent?

To respond appropriately to this question it is necessary first of all to review some of the harsh realities facing the African continent. Secondly, as always, it is necessary to examine the biblical materials, for this is the starting point for any meaningful Christian discussion of our problems in Africa. Thirdly, we should critically examine some current approaches to the problem of poverty in Africa. Finally, we can make some recommendations on this problem of poverty.

John Stott recommends that the Christian should practice a double listening,

We listen to the Word with humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to understand. We listen to the world with critical alertness, anxious to understand it too and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to sympathise with it and to seek grace to discover how the gospel relates to it.

We need to listen humbly to the reality of poverty and listen humbly to God as He speaks to us in order to bring the Good News to them. The Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches reminded us of the need for this listening by stating. "We heard the cry of those who long for peace; of the hungry and exploited who demand bread and justice; of the victims of discrimination who claim justice; of the increasing millions who seek for the meaning of life" (WCC 1968:5). In this very painful situation, we must seek to listen to the problem of poverty in Africa, and listen to the Word of God. Indeed H. O. Brown has reminded us that "In true Old Pietistic fashion, a personal faith in Christ necessarily had to be accompanied by a *praxis pietatis* of very practical dimensions" (Brown, *The Problem of Poverty*, p.20).

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POVERTY IN AFRICA

There are several factors that have contributed to the problem of poverty in the African continent. These could be listed as overpopulation, inadequate health care, illiteracy, war, civil unrest, corruption, and famine.

Overpopulation: In Africa, it is obvious that African population is growing faster than the continent can sustain. For example, the average woman south of the Sahara will have 6.3 births in her life. Women in North Africa average 4.5 births and American women average 2.1 births. Though the African is poorer compared to other continents, he is the one that is producing more children that he cannot feed. The Nigerian Human Development report states that "From all observations, the sexual propensity of the core poverty group to reproduce themselves far exceeds their capacity to feed

many mouths" (p.31). The saying is true that the rich continue to get richer, while the poor continue to get children – and of course, therefore, continue to get hungrier and poorer.

Inadequate health care: There is also the issue of inadequate health care. Infant and maternal mortality is higher on the African continent. HIV/AIDS is claiming millions of lives. Tropical diseases, such as the deadly Ebola fever, malaria, and pneumonia, are the order of the day. Inadequate health care has a negative effect on workers' productivity.

Illiteracy: The African continent is still illiterate; many adults cannot even read or write. Women suffer more from illiteracy than the men do, because the children and women are forced to shoulder a considerable part of the economic burden.

War: As for war and civil strife, again Africa takes the lead. War now consumes Africa from the Horn to Namibia. Nearly a third of sub-Saharan Africa's 42 countries are embroiled in international strife or internal civil wars, and more and more African rulers are seeking military solutions to political problems: at least 13 have sent troops to neighbours' wars. Other countries are plagued by gangs of armed criminals, who can be as disruptive as political rebels. The cost is alarming (*The Economist*, November 16, 1998). Within a very short period, Laurent Kabila has survived as president of Congo, though this has cost the Congolese government \$5 billion. How many billions of dollars are spent on the purchase of weapons of warfare which are used to kill young men and women, leaving behind orphans and widows with a devastated economy? Rebels intentionally block supplies to the rest of the country. The rebels usually want food for themselves and to help them gain political support from displaced local people, so they prevent food to reach the masses. This was clearly illustrated in Congo where the militia men reserved food for themselves and their families and controlled the distribution of aid so as to maintain their power over the other refugees. One wonders, for example, if the money that Nigeria has sunk in the ECOMOG involvement in Liberia, and now in Sierra Leone, had been invested in the nation's economy, how it might have contributed to the easing of the economic problems of Nigeria.

Ethnic Strife: The ethnic strife so common to Africa also contributes to its impoverishment. The people of Rwanda and Burundi, 85% of them Hutus and nearly all the rest Tutsi, have been quite literally at each others' throats for years. Again the article in the *Chicago Tribune* got it right, "The potential for sudden outbursts of violence exists in most African countries, as rising populations meet falling living standards, and as weak governments confront regional or ethnic movements". Poverty has been a key factor that has fuelled these wars and internal strife.

Drought: Closely allied to wars and conflict are the constant droughts and famines in African countries. Drought often leads to destruction of crops, livestock and human life. Famine and starvation follow with deadly results.

Corruption: There is no doubt that one of the greatest factors contributing to poverty in Africa is corrupt governments and leaders. Corruption has clearly infected politicians and the various governmental systems in Africa. Transparency International last year identified Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world. The World Bank in 1999 noted that Nigeria has gained the reputation as a country whose ample resources are wasted due to corruption and where corruption poses a formidable barrier. For example, \$250 billion was earned from oil proceeds since the early 1990's, but due to inflation of contracts and diversion of funds very little development has been achieved.

Corruption indeed has been elevated to the level of a crooked art. General Mainasara of Niger Republic, who was assassinated by his own personal bodyguard, left behind one of the five poorest countries in Africa. During his tenure political promises were broken and abused, workers' salaries went unpaid for five months, and the economy left citizens unable to provide for their basic needs of life. Many African countries can tell the same story.

Unfortunately, Christians have become part of these corrupt practices. For example, though it is estimated that in Congo 96% of the population is Christian, the church appeared helpless as Mobutu together with his aides stole and plundered the country's resources. In Burundi where the population is 92% Christians, most of the people participated in the genocide. In Nigeria a panel report

indicates that between September 1988 and June 1991 \$12.4 billion of oil revenues disappeared into special accounts (*The Economist*, October 22nd 1993). The late Head of State and dictator of Nigeria, General Abacha, together with his cronies, stole billions. And there were Christians who were implicated in this naked theft and ruin of the Nigerian economy. In Liberia most governments have been Christians. Sources report that at one time all the cabinet members were not only Christians but had been pastors, elders or at least lay readers in the church at one time or the other. One may say then that the African church has lost its role of being salt and light in the world.

All of this justifies the following sobering assessment of Africa's current situation: "Falling living standards, environmental degradation and high population growth rates risk pushing already impoverished communities to the brink of their capacity to survive, and into competition for scarce resources" (*Chicago Tribune*). As the rest of the world is progressing, getting richer, and having better living standards, Africa is rapidly deteriorating, getting more children and of course getting, poorer, hungrier, sicker, less clothed, and less sheltered. As the countries are consumed in war, men are killed and widows and orphans are created daily. This to me is the index of poverty.

Having familiarised ourselves with this picture of African realities, let us now listen to what God says in His Word with regard to poverty. We shall be asking ourselves the question: "What hope, indeed what Good News, is there for the poor of Africa?"

THE POOR IN SCRIPTURE

A proper view of the poor must begin from the beginning. When God created man, the ground was good and man was to plough it in order for it to produce. Apparently, it produced in abundance, but this changed as a result of the Fall. When man sinned, God said, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground" (Gen. 3:18-19). It

is therefore the result of sin that poverty entered and is present in the world. In this paper, we shall make a quick survey of the poor as revealed in the Scriptures.

In Scripture the term "poor" can have both a spiritual and a material meaning. The "poor" in the spiritual sense denotes "the humble and the meek". But for the purposes of this discussion, I shall limit myself to referencing poverty in the material sense. "Poor" in this paper refers to "one who is destitute of wealth and material goods, lacking in even the necessities of life".

The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, there are many words that are used to describe the poor. Some of the more common words include *ani* (71 times), which denotes "a person who is bowed down, who occupies a lowly position. He has to look up to others who are higher than he He is the man bowed down under pressure and finds himself in a dependent relationship". *dal* (48 times), meaning "physical and material poverty", comes from the Hebrew root *dalal*, meaning "to be thin, weak, sickly". *ebhyon* (sixty-one times) means "one who begs". He is both a poor person and a beggar. *rush* means "the needy; to be poor". It indicates not only a need, but also an expectation and a request (Ex. 23:6-11).

Amos 2:6,7 has all these words except *rush*: "Because they sell the righteous for money and the needy (*ebhyon*) for a pair of shoes; they trample on the head of the poor (*dallim*) and turn aside the way of the afflicted (*anawim*)". In most references, the poor include orphans, strangers, aliens and widows, because all of these have to depend on others to provide for their livelihood (Ex. 22:3-24). I shall now give a quick survey of the Old Testament witness concerning the poor.

Before Israel went into the Promised Land, God had promised them prosperity if they would obey. He said thus in Deuteronomy 15:4, "there shall be no poor [*ebhyon*] among you, since the Lord will surely bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess. If only you listen obediently to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you."

However, since they were rebellious, there were many poor and needy in the land who required help. God in his love and mercy made provision for the poor and the needy. The books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus contain God's laws to help the poor. Within the judicial system the poor person in the community of Israel is not to be favoured (Ex.23:3) nor disfavoured (23:6,7). Concerning loans (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36; Deut. 23:20), there is a prohibition "not to exact interest on a loan made to a poor man; and if a poor man's cloak has been taken as a pledge that he will repay a loan, to restore it to him before the sun goes down".

The laws of gleaning (Law of Holiness) in Leviticus 19:9, 10, also required of the Israelites "that gleanings are to be left deliberately for the poor and the aliens" (23:22). The farmers, however, had the power to grant "gleaning rights to certain of the poor and sometimes favoured an especially deserving person, as Boaz did Ruth". The Jubilee and the Sabbatical years (Ex. 23:10ff; Lev. 25:1-7; 25:8-10; Deut. 15:1-11) dealt with situations in which "improvident Israelites burdened by debt and sometimes men beset by adversity, sold themselves as bondsmen". The law required that the "bondservant was not only to be well treated, but he was to be discharged with a liberal pay for his services. The Lord God promised the Israelites that He would bless them and there would be no poor in their midst if only they would obey his commandments (Deut. 15:4). However, as we move into the Monarchical period, one notices that these laws were disregarded.

During the monarchy, there is evidence that Israelite society had undergone dramatic political and economic changes. One notices, for example, the rise of urban civilisation with kings amassing wealth and enlisting people into the army. The wealthy landowners also took advantage of the depression and wars to oppress the poor. Colin Brown notes also that during the monarchy, "the economy changed from one of barter to one using money, and many of the farmers became financially dependent on townsmen".

This is the background against which the prophets spoke (Amos 4:1, 2:4; Isa. 10:1-2; 11:4). At this time, being poor became synonymous with being oppressed. The most prominent cause of poverty is the injustice and exploitation of the poor by the rich. The

blame lies with the traders who exploit their customers (Hos. 12:8; Amos 8:5; Mic. 6:10; Is. 3:14; Jer. 5:27f, 6:12), with corrupt judges (Amos 5:7; Jer. 22:13-17; Mic. 3:9-11; Is. 5:23; 10: 12), and with the seizure of property (Mic. 2:1-3; Ezek. 22:29; Hab. 2:5). The story of Ahab and Naboth in 1 Kings 21 demonstrates the injustices that were practised against the poor by the rich.

Wisdom Literature and the Psalms also reveal interesting and diverse information about the poor. In Proverbs, "virtue was linked with poverty, wealth with wickedness (Prov. 19:1; 28:6; 19:22). One finds in the book of Proverbs that poverty is caused by laziness (Prov. 10:4; 19:15; 24; 20:13; 21:17ff), foolishness (Prov. 11:14; 10:14-16; 13:18-1) and short-sightedness (Prov. 21:5).

Job, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that he had helped the poor and needy. In 29:12-20, Job states that he had responded to their pleas for help (19:12), had helped the handicapped (29:12) and he was a comfort to widows (29:13). He was a father of the poor (29:16) Job explains the fact that he had been compassionate and caring for the poor and needy.

In the Psalms, the enemies of the poor are the wicked (*rashim*). They are referred to as the wicked (10:4-7; 140:5,9), despoilers (35:10), plunderers (109:11), creditors (109:11), and perjured witness (35:11; 109:31) Because of their condition, the poor turn helplessly and humbly to God in prayer. It is in the Psalms that the poor began to be associated with those who turn to God and seek his help (Ps. 72:2; 4, 12ff).

With this brief survey, one can see that the Old Testament testifies that God cares for the poor and that He desires His own people to care for them. He made special laws to enable His people to care for the poor adequately. To oppress the poor was to incur divine displeasure. A compassionate and caring attitude to the poor was regarded as the will of God, the virtue of kings, and the duty of the common people. Having looked at the Old Testament, we now turn our attention to the New Testament teaching concerning the poor.

The New Testament

While there is no extended treatment of the poor in the New Testament as in the Old Testament, there is abundant concern and attention paid to the needs of the poor. There are two Greek words which describe the poor. *penes* (34 times) refers to the man who cannot live from his property but has to work with his hands. It is used for the economically and legally oppressed. *ptochus* (34 times) occurs mostly in the Gospels (24 times), and of these, 10 times in Luke. It signifies utter dependence on society. As a noun it means a beggar and stands in contrast to *plousios*, meaning "rich, owning property".

The life and ministry of Jesus indicate that the poor had a prominent role throughout his earthly life. He himself was poor, for though "the birds of the air have nests, and foxes have holes, the son of man has no place to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20; Lk. 9:50). Early in his ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount he said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:23; Lk. 6:20). The point here is that "the poor served as a particularly apt metaphor for those who had no hope except in God". In another instance, Jesus praised the poor widow's generosity over against the scribes who exploited the poor (Mk. 12:38-40). Yet in another context Jesus made the comment that "the poor you have with you always" (Mt. 19:16-21; Mk. 14:1-9). He was not saying that the Church should disregard the poor but was simply echoing the passage in Deuteronomy 15:11, "there will always be the poor in the land".

He certainly wanted this to be an "incentive for generosity as a result of which there will be no poor among you" (Deut. 15:4). "What Jesus said, can be taken to be a statement of fact that the succeeding centuries continue to bear out". The entire teaching and life-style of Jesus supports this interpretation. Compassion and care for the needy is central in most key parables that Jesus gave. The rich man was condemned, not because of his riches but because he neglected the poor man Lazarus by the gate (Lk. 16:19-31). The story of the Great Supper (Lk. 14:10-24) indicates that the poor matter. When others declined the invitation to the supper, the maimed and the poor were invited instead. On a particular occasion Jesus demanded that the young rich ruler sell his possessions and

give to the poor (Mk. 10:21; Lk. 18:22; 21:2). Zacheaus promised to sell his possessions and give some to the poor as a sign of his conversion (Lk. 19:1-10).

Jesus not only taught about the need to help the poor, He was also compassionate to the poor and provided for their needs. He fed the crowd (Mk. 6:33-44; 8:1-9). It is worth noting that when Jesus saw the crowd he was moved with compassion because they had nothing to eat (8:2). He also raised the only son of the widow at Nain (Lk. 7:12). It has already been mentioned that in the Old Testament widows, orphans and poor are usually mentioned together. By raising the widow's son, Jesus was deliberately helping a needy person. In the final days of his ministry, Jesus declared that caring for the sick, needy, and homeless was actually caring for him. Failure to care for the needy was equally neglecting him (Matt. 25:31-36). Later, Peter said of Jesus that "he went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Jesus then provided a good example for his disciples in terms of a compassionate and caring concern for the poor.

The birth of the early Church as recorded in the book of Acts also demonstrates that the poor and needy were taken care of (Acts 2:44-45; 4:33; 34-35). Also in the epistles the churches were involved in collecting gifts for the other churches in need. Paul personally conveyed these gifts and urged the churches to remember the poor (Rom. 12:13; 15:2; 1 Cor. 16:1,2, 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1-2). In the book of James, the unfair treatment of the poor in the church is condemned (Jas 2:1ff).

Summary of the Biblical Data

The teaching of Scripture demonstrates that God cares for the poor. For the Israelites He made special laws to cater for the needs of the poor. According to the Old Testament, the person "who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God". Similarly, in the New Testament any disregard for the poor is considered a sin. Thus the rich man was condemned not because of his riches but because he disregarded the poor man by his gate. The rich are condemned in the Epistle of James because they maltreat the poor in their midst.

The Scriptures therefore bear a consistent testimony to the fact that compassion and care for the poor is a divine command for the believer and for the Church of Jesus Christ. To be charitable was considered a virtue throughout biblical history.

Given the abundant biblical teaching on the topic, one might well expect that Christians would agree with how they should view and approach the problem of poverty. Not so, unfortunately. We turn our attention now to some current approaches that must be assessed as inadequate in the light of biblical witness.

SOME INADEQUATE APPROACHES TO POVERTY

Some approaches to poverty must be judged unacceptable for the believer because, however sincere, to one degree or another they misrepresent the teaching of Scripture on poverty. We must all be sensitive to bias and theological prejudice when it comes to problems of poverty. Literature on this topic frequently demonstrates a bias and makes Scripture defend a particular stance.

In her excellent article, "Why Do We Argue Over How to Help the Poor?", Judith Lingenfelter observes that there are four groups of people who come to the issue of poverty with a particular bias. Some represent an authoritarian/fatalist bias, some a hierarchical bias, some the individualist bias, and others the egalitarian bias. Each of these approaches takes a different perspective on the factors of economic growth, on who is blame for poverty, on how to manage resources, and on the willingness to take risks in order to produce change. The authoritarian/fatalist blames poverty on fate. The hierarchist does not really know who to blame, and claims that it is easier to place the blame on deviants who must be re-educated. The individualist thinks it is bad luck or personal incompetence. And the egalitarian blames the corrupt system. Each of these, of course, generates a specific way to help the poor, based on its particular grid.

God "Sides" with the Poor

Almost all literature on the proper Christian approach to poverty demonstrates a consensus that God has a concern for the poor. The critical question is, "How is God's concern then portrayed as compared with what is revealed of His concern in Scripture?" Ronald Sider, an evangelical scholar who is well known for fighting for the cause of the poor, has this to say about God and the poor:

But in a mysterious way that we can only half fathom, the Sovereign of the universe identifies with the weak and destitute (Prov.14:31). Even more moving is the positive formulation: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord" (19:17). By contrast with the way you and I, as well as the comfortable and powerful of every age and society, always act toward the poor, God seems to have an overwhelming bias in favor of the poor. But He is biased only in contrast with our sinful unconcern... God is not neutral. His freedom from bias does not mean that he maintains neutrality in the struggle for justice. God is on the side of the poor. The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that God is at work in history casting down the rich and exalting the poor because the rich are wealthy precisely because they have oppressed the poor and have neglected to aid the needy.

Even though it would take a whole book to respond to some of the issues that Sider raises here, it would be appropriate here to outline at least briefly some serious problems with what he has raised. One of the points in Sider's argument is the assertion that the rich oppress the poor, that the rich gained their riches by exploitation. Consequently, God is siding with the poor to liberate them. In response, our study has indicated that people are poor for various reasons, not for one. Some are poor because of their own lack of discipline and initiative. Other people are genuine victims, suffering from injury, diseases, or catastrophes such as famine and earthquakes. Still others are poor because of economic exploitation. Slavery is a historical example of this. South African Apartheid and the East Indian caste system are contemporary versions.

The crucial point is that economic victimisation is not the only cause of poverty. There are other factors as well. These include famine, bereavement and wars. In Africa and many parts of the

world the many civil wars not only result in destruction of property but also the countless loss of the lives of young people who are needed to work on the farms. The consequences of these are numerous. For example, more widows and orphans are left behind.

In response to Sider and others then, it is more accurate to state that some people and nations are poor because of oppression. An example would be in South Africa, where equal opportunities were denied to native Africans. Here we would agree that God would answer the prayers of such oppressed people and judge their oppressors. But what about nations such as Ethiopia, the Sudan, Congo, Niger and many others, where the causes of poverty are civil war, natural disaster or corruption by public officials? It seems to me that Sider has made a sweeping generalisation which cannot stand the test of Scripture or of reality. The conclusion, therefore, is that God is not indiscriminately identified with the poor. David Chilton rightly states, "Whose side is God on? Not the rich; not the poor; not any social or economic class; not any race." God does not take sides. He is just and compassionate.

Equal Distribution of Wealth

Another misconception that has been advanced is that justice demands the equal distribution of wealth. The gap between the rich and the poor is seen as sinful and therefore must be eliminated. Sider appeals to 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 in which he claims that "Paul clearly enunciates the principle of economic equality among the people of God to guide the Corinthians in their giving." But careful attention to the context indicates that the point is not a Pauline demand for equal distribution of wealth among the churches of Macedonia, Greece and Asia Minor and the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8:9). The passage speaks of these gifts as a "gracious work" (8:7), compares them with "the gracious gift" (8:24), and terms them "the proof of your love" (8:24), "a bountiful gift" (9:5), done by each "as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion" (9:7). The passage goes on to say that true generosity springs not from a sense of duty but from the surpassing grace of God (9:14). It is obvious that "the equality envisioned is not that of economic condition but of proportionate

giving – giving in proportion to what one has, not what one does not have, and of needs being met.” A clear principle that emerges from this passage, and the New Testament as a whole (to be developed later), is that Christians need to respond to the poor. Giving to alleviate poverty is part of a Christian life-style.

Others have also argued that the real problem of poverty is the wealth of rich nations. Jeremy Rifkin, for example, states that, without a fundamental redistribution of wealth, "all talk of lowering energy flow and heeding our planet's biological limits will result in nothing but the rich locking the poor forever into their subservient status." Sider similarly declares "God sides with the poor because He disapproves of extreme wealth and poverty. His passion compels him to obliterate rich societies and individuals that oppress the poor and neglect the needy. The rich neglect or oppose justice because justice demands that they end their oppression and share with the poor. Therefore, God actively opposes the rich".

Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife, Brazil, speaking in a Latin American context says, "the northern hemisphere, the developed area of the world, the 20 percent who possess 80 percent of the world's resources, are of Christian origin. The 20 percent who are keeping the 80 percent in a situation which is often sub-human – are they or are they not responsible for the violence and hatred which are beginning to break out all over the world?" Contrary to Helder's observation, there are nations whose wealth is not responsible for the economic hardships of other nations. A case in point is Japan, one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Japan is neither a Christian nation nor did it obtain its present wealth by exploiting another country, yet within a span of a century it moved from "under-development to a full-blown modernity".

Though we must not ignore external exploitation of Africa by richer nations, we must note that there is also the internal exploitation by the rich. Government officials are more interested in enriching their families and their own tribal communities. Similarly, their own townsmen expect special privileges from their own sons and daughters. In most African countries what creates an immense barrier in successfully combating poverty is the fact that the ethnic and tribal factor takes precedence over national

commitment. Okwudiba Nnoli, writing from a Nigerian perspective, succinctly declares,

Most Nigerians have come to believe that unless their 'own men' are in government, they are unable to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government. Hence governmental decisions about the citing of industries, the building of roads, award of scholarships, and appointments to positions in the public services, are closely examined in terms of their benefits to the various ethnic groups in the country.

The problem of tribalism really describes the situation facing many African countries. Tribalism or ethnic conflicts are the main causes of civil war in Africa (Rwanda, Sudan, etc.). And it is almost impossible for any economic system to succeed in such an environment. The problem suggests more than just a tribal issue: it is a symptom of moral problems. What is needed critically and urgently in these countries is not a different economic or political system (as important as those are), but rather a moral and ethical foundation in the hearts of people to be able to sustain these systems. It is precisely at this point that the Church can influence the development of a strong and a viable economy. The point is, any attempt to deal with poverty must deal not only with the external causes (bad economy, famine, death), but also with the internal moral issues. Moral and spiritual solutions are basic in any attempt to deal with the problem of poverty. The observation of Brown is appropriate,

If scarcity and want are caused first of all by external conditions, and secondly by defects in human wisdom, character, and desire to deal equitably with one another in sharing this world's limited resources, it is apparent that we cannot hope for a full and lasting solution to the problem of scarcity and resultant poverty unless we have a means to repair those defects. We do have such a means, but it is spiritual, not social, in nature. Social remedies are not worthless; indeed, they can have great value; but they cannot solve the problem in any fundamental way.

Overthrowing Corrupt Structures

Following from this false assessment that "God is on the side of the poor", and the demand for "equal distribution of wealth", is the idea that there must be a violent revolution to overthrow the rich in order to achieve such objectives. This tendency is characteristic of third world countries, especially in the African continent.

The idea that a violent revolution is the means of alleviating poverty can be illustrated very easily in third world countries. In Nigeria, for example, in its 29 years of independence, there have been fifteen years of military rule. There were military coups in 1966, 1976, 1984, 1985 and 1993. Some of these were bloody and violent. Intelligent and promising military officers were executed. In the 1976 abortive coup, 31 senior military officers were executed by a firing squad on one day. Ghana and Liberian military coups were also bloody and violent. The reason usually given for a military coup is that government officials are enriching themselves while the poor are getting poorer. In all these military coups there are promises that they are for the good of the poor, yet they usually only make matters worse for the masses. Experience has shown that once a class has ended a party, it also becomes a rich class and the poor continue to suffer. Violent revolutions do not seem to be a biblical or practical solution to helping the poor masses. Even in non-violent situations, the attempt to overcome inequality by confiscating the wealth of the rich to give to the poor has not worked either. Brown observes that,

Seldom if ever can poverty be eased by confiscating the wealth of the favored. . . If one seeks to prevent inequality, one most inevitably stifle productivity and harm the least favored. At least that has been the universal or all but universal experience of every society that has seriously tried it.

Guilt Manipulation

Another false approach is that of assigning guilt to the wealthy. Sider writes: "All the rich and developed countries are directly involved. We are participants in a system that dooms even more people to agony and death than slavery did". If the case can be made that wealth has been accumulated through exploitation of the

masses, then those responsible should be called to account for their actions. However, if some people are not directly or indirectly responsible for the poverty of some other people, how can they be guilty for something for which they are not responsible? Furthermore, from a biblical and Christian point of view, manipulation of guilt is never given as an appropriate motivation for helping the poor.

PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON HELPING THE POOR

In order for the Church in Africa to respond adequately to poverty, we need to ensure that we have sound biblical perspectives. These in turn can enable and justify specific recommendations to help the poor in our own continent today.

The Christian as Salt and Light

It has been noted with numerous examples that corruption is one of the major contributions to poverty in Africa. Unfortunately, Christians in many of these poor stricken countries have contributed in exploiting the poor. Jesus commanded Christians to be salt and light in society. John Stott identifies four truths which are inherent in these powerful symbols of salt and light. First, Christians are fundamentally different from non-Christians. Secondly, Christians must permeate non-Christian society. Thirdly, Christians can influence non-Christian society. Fourthly, Christians must retain their Christian distinctions. The one who brings the good news to the poor must reflect that goodness in himself. When Christians are involved in the rottenness and darkness that enmesh the poor, then it is very pathetic indeed.

In 1997 Christians in Nigeria so strongly felt that they were implicated in the moral decay in society that they met in the capital city Abuja for a historic meeting, a "Congress on Christian Ethics" (COCEN). At the end of a five-day meeting, Christians came up with the NIGERIA COVENANT, which was a powerful pledge and tool for halting Nigeria's downward moral spiral. Christians were to bind themselves before God and themselves to be distinct, to be

righteous and make a difference. African Christians should come with an AFRICAN COVENANT in which they study the moral impasse that is affecting the African continent, and should come with a covenant through which all Christians, whether in government or in the private sector, can commit themselves to be honest and uncompromising Christians. The Nigeria Covenant reads in part,

We, the Christians of Nigeria, believe that God in Christ is the Master of our lives and that He has revealed His will in the Holy Bible. Therefore, we pledge to submit to the Lordship of Christ, leadership of the Holy Spirit, and authority of God's Word in every part of life. We pledge to acquire property only in legitimate ways and refrain from stealing or defrauding. We believe God gives positions of leadership and responsibility for service. We pledge to uphold and defend truth, regardless of its source and to resist lying, cheating or other distortions of truth. We believe that without justice, there can be no peace in any human society. We pledge to be just in our dealings with others and to resist all forms of injustice and corruption in society, including giving or receiving bribes of money, positions, material possessions, sexual favour or intangible assets. We will also resist any form of injustice or unfairness in the law enforcement or judicial systems. We pledge not to exploit, abuse, steal, misuse or mismanage any of these public assets. We believe that God has ordained governments to safeguard the well-being of their peoples and resources. We reject sectarianism, commercialism, extravagant lifestyles, neglect of the needy and all other evils that weaken the testimony and purpose of the Church. We solemnly pledge to fulfill these commitments, no matter the risk, and to support all others who join us in our stand for Christian ethics. In the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen. [Adopted at the Congress on Christian Ethics in Nigeria (COCEN) held at the Abuja International Conference Centre, November 3-6, 1997].

The Church in Africa could bring Good News to the Poor if it were to covenant before God and before each other not to exploit the poor, but rather to defend the poor, support the poor and do all it can within its power to better the life of the poor. That way, the Church can be a source of Good News to the poor within her midst.

Human Dignity

The poor, though lacking in material possessions, are created in the image of God. Based on this Scriptural teaching, the poor should be treated as persons, not things. Believers especially should have compassion towards the poor, especially as "hundreds of millions of our fellow human beings who like us have been created in the image of God ... live in conditions of appalling deprivations". In order to respond properly to the poor, it is necessary that the poor be seen and appreciated as human beings created in God's image. God loves and cares for them.

The Example of Jesus and the Disciples

The early ministry of Jesus demonstrated God's concern for the poor and needy. His primary mission was to die for the sins of many (Mk. 10:45), but He also demonstrated God's mercy and compassion by healing the sick, casting out demons, providing for the physical needs of the people. "Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor, the captives, the blind, and oppressed" (Lk. 4:18-19). Though He himself had little, Jesus made a regular practice of giving to the poor (Jn. 13:29). He taught his disciples to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44), an extension of the second great commandment of the Old Testament, to love our neighbours as ourselves (Lev. 19:18). Love in this context is not essentially a feeling, but rather concrete acts that meet a person's needs. Christ's entire ministry could be characterised as a life dedicated to serving the true needs of men and women. Randy Alcorn reminds us that "Giving to the poor and helpless and caring for them is so basic to the Christian faith that those who don't do it are not considered true Christians. Indeed, Christ himself says if we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, invite in the stranger, give clothes to the needy, care for the sick, and visit the persecuted, we are doing those things to him" (Matt. 25:34-35). Peter could summarise, "Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts. 10:38). We are equally enjoined to "do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:4).

A Whole Gospel

In order to respond properly to the poor, the whole gospel must be presented. Too often the gospel has been presented in half a manner. Beisner is right when he observes that many people object to evangelism as "pie in the sky bye-and-bye" when theologically conservative Christians insist that evangelism takes a higher priority than giving charitably to the poor. Typically our evangelism has been truncated, divorced from the true discipleship that must follow if we are to obey the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

Harold O. J. Brown also demonstrates the social implications of Jesus' charge to his disciples in Matthew 28. He states that Matthew 28:20 "is an essential part of the Great Commission – and if it is, then a substantial part of the evangelical community must be out of commission, because while we are engaged to make disciples, we are slow to teach them to observe". David similarly remarks,

Salvation in Scripture is no liberation from the body – as in Platonic thought and much eastern religion – but salvation of the whole person, body and soul. For the sake of our salvation the Word was made flesh (John 1:14) – the Son of God assuming our true and entire human nature, while at the same time retaining his divine essence. The Christian hope beyond this life was for the resurrection of the body, not merely for the immortality of the soul. God made us as whole persons, redeemed us as whole persons, cares for us as whole persons, and will finally glorify us as whole persons.

John Stott states,

especially those of us who are called 'evangelical' Christians need to take this New Testament emphasis to heart. We have to beware of magnifying faith and knowledge at the expense of love... For saving faith and serving love belong together. Whenever one is absent, so is the other. Neither can exist in isolation.

The biblical concept of evangelism and discipleship is well demonstrated by Paul and the Christians in the early Church. He not only made sure they were strong spiritually, but he also taught

them the joy of working in order to feed themselves. With confidence he could write,

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labour and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, but you might follow our example. If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good (2 Thes. 3:6-12).

This passage warns against laziness and encourages the hard work that prevents poverty. It is therefore significant that in sharing the gospel the new believers should be taught to mature in their understanding of work. For those of us who are the children of first generation Christians, we can see the difference in Christian homes that received Christ even in one village. The missionaries taught them how to work and improve their crops. This is an example of presenting a whole gospel which has both spiritual and physical implications.

Charitable Giving

One thing that is clearly taught in Scripture is that believers, whether rich or poor, are to practice charitable giving. The believer is expected to give from a willing and generous heart. It is not by compulsion. In the New Testament Church there was regular, systematic congregational giving to meet the needs of the poor (Acts 4:34; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). If there is one thing that can be learnt from the early Church it is that Christians should respond to the needs of the poor especially in their midst. As already noted, Galatians 6:10 states this explicitly, "so then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially

to those who are of the household of the faith". Augustine comments well,

That bread which you keep belongs to the hungry; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, to the naked; those shoes which are rotting in your possession, to the shoeless; that gold which you have hidden in the ground, to the needy. Wherefore, as often as you are able to help others, and refuse, so often did you do them wrong.

It is appropriate that every church and individual Christian must ask, "What are we doing to feed the hungry and help the poor? What are we doing to secure justice for the poor? What are we doing to uphold the cause of the needy?"

Government Policies

It is possible for Government policies to hurt the poor. Beisner lists some policies that could do so: "minimum wage laws, occupational licensure laws, restrictive trade laws, legally enforced union pay scales, tight immigration restrictions, regulations that tend to raise the cost of living". In Nigeria the mismanagement of the economy led to introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which in turn led to high cost of goods and services, while the income of the Nigerian worker depreciated. Thus the government can itself be responsible for introducing policies that have weakened the economy and harmed the poor. Labour too is really very cheap in most African countries. Someone has well remarked that people work in Africa as much as elephants but eat as little as ants.

The international community should give third world countries a break with regard to their heavy debts. National governments should also provide programmes that would reduce the economic hardships of their citizens. To me this is an excellent way for addressing the problem of poverty in Africa, and it can be based directly on the principle found in the divine provisions to give relief to the poor in the Old Testament. Such action should be motivated not by a demand for equality but by a commitment to help alleviate distress and give the poor opportunities. Target groups such as the rural poor, civil servants, widows and orphans should be identified

and specific programmes and/or aid should be directed to solving their problems. In Nigeria the government established the Family Economic Advancement Program (FEAP) to provide loans to families to start small-scale businesses. Also recently the Women Rights, Advocacy and Protection Agency (WRAPA) has been established especially to protect the rights of women who are usually degraded and abused in the Nigerian society.

**Church Programmes and
Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs)**

Church programmes and the non-governmental agencies (NGOs) play an important role in helping the poor. As a matter of fact, mission agencies in the past were often the sole developers of assistance for the poor in most African countries. They introduced education, medical care and improved agricultural production so that the farmer was able to take care of himself and his family. The establishment of these agencies was aimed at raising the living standards of the less privileged and the poor. Some of these that have met with remarkable success include Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN), People Oriented Development of ECWA (POD), ECWA Rural Development of ECWA (ERD), AMANA Rescue Mission, and Daughters of Abraham. Amana Rescue Mission is aimed at helping widows who are normally abused and exploited by the family and society. Daughters of Abraham also aim at reaching out and helping the many prostitutes who are exploited. CRUDAN states in its brochure that,

Most people are unable to adequately meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing. Malnutrition, which is the most acute physical expression of poverty, is on the increase and is mostly manifested in children. Mortality rate among children is very high. Poor people are oppressed, exploited and treated unjustly by politicians, the police, businessmen and government officials. Hence they are powerless. Projects meant for the people are poorly executed and poorly maintained. These projects are not usually sustained mainly because of lack of participation of the people in the planning and implementation of the projects. The poor are poorly organised ... Because of their

powerlessness, they are forced to tolerate corrupt and unjust leaders and officials.

What is exciting about these programmes of non-governmental organisations in Africa is that they target specific groups in need, and then direct their efforts to meet those needs. The mission of CRUDAN, for example, is "to promote holistic development by enabling the church in Nigeria to empower the poor in the name of Jesus Christ." POD also in its brochure notes that it started because it had the rural poor as its target group. The overall goal of POD is "to facilitate the process of meeting the needs of the underprivileged people in Nigeria in a holistic manner (physical, social, spiritual), so that they are enabled to improve their quality of life by taking increasing responsibility for themselves and others". The Church in Africa will do well if she identifies these groups in each context and tries to develop programmes to meet their needs. Richer churches overseas should also come to the aid of these agencies and churches in order to support their efforts.

God Cares for the Poor

We have already established the fact that God, as He is revealed in biblical history, cares very much for the poor, and He wants his children to care for them. As a matter of fact, care for the poor is a major theme throughout Scripture. Failure to care for the poor would bring God's judgement, especially if they are mistreated. The Christian needs to adopt a similar compassionate attitude. That the believer is to be compassionate to the poor is demonstrated in biblical history. Christians should be very careful of being insensitive toward the poor, callous to their plight, pretending their condition isn't so bad, that they are irresponsible. As Jacques Ellul states, "Each of us must face up to the poor. We must either do so now, or when we stand before the Judge".

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

This paper began by looking at the problem of poverty in Africa. Poverty is real, pervasive, degrading and dehumanising. In dealing with the problem of poverty, the Church must accept its reality in order to be able to respond adequately. The Bible clearly establishes that God cares for the poor, and He requires that believers also care for the poor in their own midst. In the Old Testament we saw that God prescribed specific ways for providing for the poor and needy. Failure to follow these prescriptions brought divine displeasure and judgement. In the New Testament also we saw that a similar concern and care for the poor is demonstrated.

We then noted some inadequate approaches to the problem of poverty. First, God is not indiscriminately siding with the poor and opposing the rich. He is just and compassionate. Secondly, equal distribution of wealth is not biblical. Confiscation of wealth either by a peaceful political process or by violent revolution in order to bring about equality creates more problems than helping the poor. It was especially emphasised that effective solutions to the problem of poverty should concentrate not only on better economic remedies but also on spiritual and moral solutions. Thirdly, we stated that guilt manipulation as a means of getting people to help the poor is unbiblical and unchristian.

We then presented what we understand to reflect biblical and Christian principles. These include: (1) God loves the poor and commands believers and the Church to act accordingly; (2) The Church, in proclaiming the Gospel, has spiritual and social responsibilities; (3) The government can also help the poor by policies that relieve their distress and give them a chance to recover; (4) Church sponsored agencies or non-governmental organisations can start programmes and projects to help target groups; and finally (5) Charitable giving is a divine mandate and should characterise the Christian life-style.

**“WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS”
A CONSIDERATION OF JESUS’
TEACHING ON POSSESSIONS**

GWAMNA DOGARA JE’ADAYIBE

The Christian Church needs to develop a theology of riches, just as much as a theology of poverty. The contemporary world is marked by commercialism, the open market system and a consumer driven economy. Some elements of the Christian community have bought into this and have fallen into a distorted understanding of the biblical view of riches as they loudly proclaim a prosperity gospel. In this article Dr. Gwamna Je’Adayibe provides us an important anecdote to materialism by examining our Lord’s teaching on material possessions. This is a needed corrective to the prosperity gospel promulgated in various circles.

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts a discourse on the teaching of Jesus in respect of possessions, or what we might alternatively refer to here, as wealth acquisition. This theme is quite pertinent for a serious reflection today, given the often misunderstood teaching of Jesus on

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it. It is even more acute because as Geza Vermes observes, "it is a central element in Jesus' teaching."¹

And if every aspect of our lives today should come under the scrutiny of the ethics of the kingdom as David Cook has also corroborated,² then we need to go back to the kingdom values, in order to apply them to our daily living. In a country where capital and property acquisition has assumed some unprecedented heights, there cannot be a better time to address this theme as now. For the purpose of this paper, therefore, we shall limit our discussion to Jesus' teaching in Matthew and Luke and how it does relate to our Nigerian experience today. We shall draw challenges which these pose to the Church in Nigeria. For the purpose of illustration, we shall pause here to provide a scenario of the acquisition appetite(s) in Nigeria in order to provide background for our discourse.

NIGERIA AND THE ACQUISITION OF WEALTH

Since the death of the late Nigeria's Head of State, General Sani Abacha, the insatiable quest for acquisition of wealth and property in Nigeria once again came into public focus in its unprecedented and unimaginable proportions. In a country where the better part of its population has been most impoverished and economically deprived in Africa, a few of its leaders and their collaborators have acquired more wealth and property than the assets of some smaller countries in Africa put together. This has made the legendary acquisition and treasures of late President Mobutu Sese Seko³ a mere child's play in comparison to Nigeria's looting of public property to private pockets by its leaders. From President Ibrahim Babangida to General Abdulsalami Abubakar, looting of state

¹ Cited in Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1997, 147.

² David Cook, *Living in the Kingdom - the Ethics of Jesus*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1992, 210.

³ It was President Mobutu Sese Seko who was alleged to have accumulated so much wealth, which surpassed the total assets of Zaire put together.

treasury has assumed almost the status of state policy where even military administrators and their cohorts, literally milked state treasuries dry, leaving empty treasuries for civilian governors to inherit, plus some hanging debts.⁴ The resultant effects of all these have been continuous pauperization of the Nigerian people. *Tell* magazine puts it this way: "As recent as 1993, the UNDP noted that four out of every ten Nigerians lived below poverty line. Today, at least seven out of ten Nigerians cannot afford basic needs, according to the UN agency".⁵

Examples of State looting of resources show this: At the death of General Sani Abacha, his loot was put at \$10 billion,⁶ apart from shares and other investments. At the exit of the military on May 29, 1999, government announced the forfeiture of Abacha's loot along with his collaborators to include,

Mohammed Abacha- \$250 million; Ismaila Gwarzo - Former National Security Adviser to General Sani Abacha - 16 duplex houses in Asokoro, Abuja, 8 story buildings in Abuja, a two story building in Kano, cash amount of \$2 million, cars and shares in companies. The same was reported of the former Finance Minister, Chief Anthony Ani and Bashir Dalhatu former Minister of Power and Steel. Similar revelations are being uncovered daily.

The Abdulsalami Abubakar's regime left billions of Naira scandal at its exit, most of which, it is believed, went into private hands. These are a few of the revelations which have been made of what seems to be the tip of the iceberg of the nation's wealth into private pockets, which constitute a significant percentage of the nation's annual budget. It is no wonder therefore that the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (TI-CPI)

⁴ Since the exit of the military on 29 May 1999, there have been revelations of massive looting of state funds across the country, which has generated the need for a massive probe of past regimes. See *Newswatch*, July 5, 1999.

⁵ *Tell*, Magazine, No. 22, May 31, 1999, 26-27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷ *The Guardian*, June 10, 1999, 4.

ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world in 1996.⁸ By Tuesday, 26th October, 1999, Transparency International in its current perception Index (CPI) report, out of 99 countries covered by the survey, puts Nigeria ahead of only Cameroon, which remained at the bottom of the list for the second year running. As Transparency International (TI) rightly observed in the report, the country's public officials were generally ever ready to take bribes.⁹ The recently launched crusade of anti-corruption in public and private life by President Olusegun Obasanjo is meant to check this trend.

The questions we pose here become relevant. Why the insatiable taste for wealth acquisition? Why do people accumulate wealth more than they really need, while others starve to death? How do they acquire wealth and property? What place does Jesus' teaching have to play in redirecting our values in respect of wealth accumulation? These are a few questions we shall address.

JESUS' TEACHING ON POSSESSIONS

The vocabulary of the New Testament on "possessions" is loaded with closely related concepts. These include: treasure, wealth, money, mammon, property, get possession of, acquisition, gaining, riches, means and goods. For example, the Greek has the following renderings:

- 1) *Thesaurus*: Place where something is kept, treasure box, storehouse, storeroom. This is used literally and figuratively (see Matt. 6:19, 21; 3:44; 2:11; 13:52; Lk. 12:34; Mk. 10:21; Heb. 11:26; Col. 2:3).
- 2) *Thesaurizo*: To store up, gather, save up, reserve. (see Matt. 6:19, Lk. 12:21; I Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 12:14; Js. 5:3; Matt. 6:20; Rom. 2:5; II Pet. 3:7).

⁸ Cited by Morgan Y. Gbefwi, in "Biblical references to corruption and the Nigerian response," a paper presented at the Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS) National Conference, at Ibadan, July 5-8, 1999, 2.

⁹ See *Thisday*, October 31, 1999, 40.

- 3) **Mamonas**: Mammon (personified), wealth, property. (see Lk. 16:9, 11; Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13).
- 4) **Peripoieomai**: To save or preserve for oneself, acquire, to obtain, get something for oneself, get possession of (see Acts 20:28; I Tim. 3:13).
- 5) **Peripoiēsis**: That which is one's own, gaining, obtaining, acquisition, a possession, property. This is the only sense used in non-material context (see Heb. 10:39; I Thess. 5:9; II Thess. 2:14; Eph. 1:14; I Pet. 2:9).
- 6) **Ploutos**: Accumulated wealth, possession of many goods, super abundance of something. (see Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:19; Lk. 8:14; Rom. 9:23; 11:26; II Cor. 8:2; Eph. 1:7, 18; 3:8; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 11:26; Rev. 5:12).
- 7) **Plouustos**: Rich, riches (Matt. 9:23f, 57; Mk. 12:41; Lk. 12:16; 16:1; 19; 18:23; 19:2).
- 8) **Chrema**: Possessions, property, means, money.
- 9) **Hyparxis**: Property, possessions.
- 10) **Ktēma**: Property, possessions, especially landed property.

Chrema, *hyparxis* and *Ktēma* are used as synonymous concepts to mean money, goods, and chattels which can be turned to money (see Matt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lk. 18:18-23).¹⁰ The Greek derivatives of these words project the same sense of material acquisition, and immense wealth, aimed at promoting a good life.

At the time of Jesus, there was no agreement as to wealth acquisition. Craig Keener has noted that, "ancient teachers like Hillel, a famous Jewish teacher, generally acknowledged the corruptibility of earthly treasure."¹¹ He further observes that some philosophers taught that people should seek only basic needs, while some felt that people could acquire possessions as long as they did not go out of their way to seek them. The Cynics, for example, owned nothing, and they despised material possessions because

¹⁰ F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 96,130,170.

¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary - New Testament*, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1963, 63.

they brought commitments and anxiety with them. And among Palestinian Jews, the Essenes shared all their possessions communally.¹² The Pharisees, on the other hand, thought of wealth as a reward for keeping the law, a sign of God's favour, while poverty was a curse.¹³ A.E. Harvey has also noted that in the second century, there was a community of Jewish Christians who made it a rule to renounce their possessions and become literally poor.¹⁴ Harvey provides an example of a certain Monobazus, the elder brother of Izates, King of Adiabene, who was converted to Judaism in 36 AD and according to tradition, "distributed all his treasures to the poor." When his brothers criticized him for this profligacy, he used exactly the same traditional arguments as Jesus: He was "gathering treasure for the world to come."¹⁵ The Acts of the Apostles also provides examples of communal sharing and ownership of property (Acts 2:45).

Jesus brought out a clear teaching on possessions in Matthew 6:19-24 and Luke 12:32ff 16:13ff. Jesus says,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Keener has provided a hint for us that because thieves could dig through the walls and steal a strong box in one's home in Jewish communities at Jesus' time, well-to-do people usually tried one of several other methods, to safeguard their wealth, by investing money with money changers, depositing it in a temple for safe keeping, or burying it in the ground or in caves at the risk of rust or

¹² *Ibid*, 224.

¹³ Donald Guthrie (ed), *The New Bible Commentary*, Revised, Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1970, 825.

¹⁴ A.E. Harvey, *Strenuous commands - The ethic of Jesus*, London, SCM Press Ltd., 1990, 117.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 125.

devaluation in the case of expensive apparel or coin.¹⁶ Colin Brown and others have corroborated Keener that "at a very early period, temples were built with treasure chambers, where gifts and taxes in kind and money could be stored."¹⁷ *Thesaurizo* is used similarly in the sense of storing up treasure, or putting it in safe keeping.

It is against such a background that Jesus advised that treasures be laid in heaven, which also referred to treasure in the world to come.¹⁸ Here, Jesus seems to be laying emphasis on the permanence of "treasures laid in heaven," against the temporal and un-enduring nature of earthly treasures. This is the crux of Jesus' teaching. The idea of "treasures in heaven" (i.e. what wins divine approval and reward in the coming kingdom) is of Jewish import. In later Judaism good works, for example, almsgiving, are a treasure which is stored up as a reward in the world to come, while the interest is enjoyed in this world as well. The rabbis sometimes spoke of treasure from which the scribe draws and of the treasure house of eternal life; i.e. the place where the souls of the dead are stored up.¹⁹ Jesus ends the teaching here in Matthew 6:24, by contrasting God and money in which money is personified as "master", the same with God, as options that one must choose to serve. In some Bible translations "mammon" is used instead of "money." Keener has noted that "mammon", an Aramaic derivative, was used for possessions or money and Jesus seems to be personifying it as an idol.²⁰ In fact, the only kind of idolatry Jesus warned against was the worship of money.²¹ Ralph Earle corroborates this further, when he observes that the word "mammon" was used to refer to "that in which one trusts" or

¹⁶ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 63.

¹⁷ Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, Michigan, Zondervan Pub. House, 1986, 830.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Colin Brown (ed.), *op. cit.*, 830.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Teachings of Jesus*. New York, Harpersan Francisco, 1991, 135.

“property”, but always with a derogatory sense of the materialistic, anti-godly and sinful.²² F.F. Bruce, adds that “mammon” connotes “accumulation”, and “piling up”.²³ Colin Brown, et al, have noted that “in itself the word may be neutral, but it acquired in negative contexts the connotation of possessions dishonestly gained and wealth dishonestly used, as in bribery”.²⁴ Bruce believes that the derivative is not important as it is the use of the word that determines its meaning. And since the service of mammon is presented in this saying as an alternative to the service of God, mammon seems to be a rival to God.²⁵ The ancient Israel insisted on following three false gods:

- i) Baalism, more commonly called idolatry,
- ii) Money, and
- iii) Philosophy.²⁶

In fact, the danger of the “love of money” was a popular theme in the ethical literature of paganism.²⁷ In the days of Jesus, money was still the same false god of the Jews that it had been in the days of the early prophets.²⁸ It is against such a backdrop that Jesus used “money” as false god, which some would prefer and invest in, than the exclusive dependence on God.

²² Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament- One Volume*, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1982, 7.

²³ F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1983, 184.

²⁴ Colin Brown (ed.), *op.cit.*, 837.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ James S. Kelso, *An Archaeologist Looks at the Gospels*, Texas, Word Book Publishers, 1969, 84.

²⁷ Geoffrey W. Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3; Michigan, Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1986, 410.

²⁸ James Kelso, *op.cit.*, 85.

Luke has also provided us with extensive information on Jesus' stance towards riches and the rich.²⁹ In Luke 12, Jesus teaches about the place of possessions in human living. A certain man had asked Jesus,

'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a Judge or an arbiter between you?' Then he said to them, 'watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions'. And He told them a parable thus:

The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'what shall I do?' I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'this is what I will do.' 'I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy, eat, drink and be merry'. But God said to him, 'you fool! This night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with any one who stores things up for himself but is not rich toward God (Lk 12:13-21).

It is important to recognize that the parable focuses upon the accumulation of additional goods by those who already have enough for their needs. Today, we measure the worth of an individual largely in terms of his possessions,³⁰ and "our standards of success are almost fatally entangled with the lust for acquisition."³¹ This critique against the "rich fool" here is that he did not think of sharing with his poor neighbors. He thought only in the first person, "what shall I do", "I will do this and that", and his life got lost in his livelihood. "He was absorbed into his own

²⁹ Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel*, New York, Orbis Books, 1978, 25.

³⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Parables of Jesus*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1983, 104.

³¹ George A. Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1973, 133.

ownings".³² Wealth tends to trap us into self-absorption, materialism, and insensitivity to others.³³

The "rich fool" also thought that he could live long while he re-organized his warehouses for more accumulation, before he sits to enjoy them. He did not acknowledge God as the source of his wealth. He had a false sense of security, which had built in him a wrong sense of values on how to use his wealth. He did not invest in the future, in God's own bank. He thought more in the typical Epicurean fashion according to the mood of the day. "Take life easy, eat, drink, and be merry". He was thus consumed in the deception of his wealth. Jesus calls his reasoning, "fool-hardy", since he does not own his own life, but was granted life by God, who decided to take it at will. The "rich fool" was rich outwardly, but empty in the sight of God. Boice has also noted that "if that rich materialist is called a fool, it puts him right up there in the company of the God-deniers" (as in Ps. 14:1 and 53:1).³⁴ People who invest in themselves outside God are empty and poor before God. They will inherit empty treasures in the world to come. The parable is "a potent reminder of the folly of living for this world's possessions"³⁵ and a critique of "all kinds of greed," as Paul says in Ephesians 5:5, which is also called *idolatry*. Perhaps the Spanish proverb captures it all, that "there are no pockets in the shroud."³⁶

Jesus lived by what he taught. He had no time to acquire wealth and property. He once said; "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has no where to lay his head" (Lk. 9:58). As Lightfoot expresses it, Jesus was born in an inn and in a borrowed stable, commenced a life of poverty lasting until he died naked on the cross.³⁷ Richard J. Cassid has noted that reference to those who are "choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of

³² *Ibid.*, 130.

³³ James Montgomery Boice, *op.cit.*, 105.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵ David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus*, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, 1989, 139.

³⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *op.cit.*, 108.

³⁷ Quoted in Herbert Lockyer, *op.cit.*, 128.

life", as in the parable of the sower, is a reminder that in Jesus' view, "the patterns and practices common to the rich are not happy ones."³⁸ Riches and accumulation of wealth do not bring happiness apart from anxieties, fears and insecurity. Lockyer has corroborated this when he notes that, "money cannot buy the greatest blessings in life".³⁹ And quoting Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler*, says: "Look to your health; and, if you have it, praise God, and value it next to a good conscience, for health is the second blessing that we mortals are capable of, a blessing that money cannot buy."⁴⁰ God's riches are without money, and without a price. No matter how much or little we have of money, it cannot secure deliverance from sin, peace with God, and life eternal.⁴¹ These plain truths are ever pertinent for even the Nigerian church to appreciate.

In Luke 16, Jesus also condemns the Pharisees who were "lovers of money", to the utter contempt of the plight of the poor amidst them, as is illustrated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man did not go to hell because he was rich but because he allowed his riches to enslave him, making him callous to the needs of others.⁴² The point of the parable and the sayings is to teach wise stewardship of worldly goods so that, when their use is past, there will nevertheless be an enduring benefit both for those who have benefited from such wise stewardship and for those who have exercised it.⁴³

The unconscious hold that wealth can lay on a good moral man and how it can blind him to the realities of responsible living is illustrated in the episode of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-25. The rich ruler thought he had kept all that was necessary to make him good to inherit eternal life; but he could not. Jesus told him, "You still lack one thing, sell everything you have and give to the

³⁸ Richard Cassidy, *op.cit.*, 133.

³⁹ Herbert Lockyer, *op.cit.*, 133.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴³ Colin Brown (ed.), *op.cit.*, 832.

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then, come, follow me." Luke records that the rich ruler was enraged, "because he was a man of great wealth" (Lk. 18:23). Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Lk. 18:24). This sums up Jesus' teaching on wealth and possessions.

Keener has noted that Jesus' saying here reflects a Jewish figure of speech for something impossible.⁴⁴ But it was not totally ruled out for the rich to inherit eternal life, hence the phrase, "how hard". Kelso has posed this question, and an answer, "what then was Christ's attitude toward wealth? It is identical with that taught in the Old Testament condensed into a single word. Christ's attitude toward money was stewardship."⁴⁵ It must be used responsibly.

Further gleanings from Jesus' teaching on possessions reveal some more insights. Jesus taught that "to be a member of the intimate group that traveled with him was to accept poverty as a condition of life and most certainly to be a son of the kingdom was to sit loose to all possessions."⁴⁶ And while Jesus noted that family relationships and possession were God's closest competitors for the first place, he taught that it was not necessary to have great possessions, not even to care about them. For those who loved family relationships so much, they were not worthy of following Jesus. Great reward is, however, promised by Jesus when he said, "No one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life" (Lk. 18:29-30).⁴⁷ Norman Anderson is quick, however, to caution that

⁴⁴ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary, op.cit.*, 240.

⁴⁵ James L. Kelso, *op.cit.*, 28.

⁴⁶ James Smart, *The Quiet Revolution: The Radical Impact of Jesus on Men of His Time*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, MCMLXIX, 93.

⁴⁷ The disciples, some who were fishermen, were engaged in a lucrative business which fetched them money for daily bread. They abandoned their fishing nets and boats and followed Jesus (Mk. 1:28; Matt. 4:20). They possibly owned, "The world's most famous fishing club" (see Leslie B.

"it is clear that Jesus did not teach that all Christians should dispose of everything they possess,"⁴⁸ as is falsely claimed by some today. In fact, Luke records that there were certain women who provided for Jesus and his disciples, "out of their resources" (Lk. 8:3). George A Buttrick has also observed that, "the Bethany home, in whose hospitable friendliness He found sheltering joy, appears to have been a home of "substance",⁴⁹ and concludes that even "the robe of Jesus for which the soldiers cast lots may not have been of 'fine linen', but it was worth owning",⁵⁰ Early Christianity too is dotted with assistance arising from wealthy individuals.

JESUS' CHALLENGE TODAY

What is the relevance of Jesus' teaching to us, particularly, the Church? The socio-ethical imperatives make this question very pertinent in our own case. Answers to this question would help to address the role the church has played in this "Nigerian malaise", or will help to pass a guilty verdict on the failures of the Church to take seriously the teaching of Jesus in respect of earthly possessions, a disease, which has infected the church itself, of recent. Gary Maxery, an American missionary in Nigeria captures the situation this way,

Flynn, *The Twelve*, Illinois, Victors Books, 1982, 71). Fishing business is still a lucrative trade by all standards in most parts of the world, including Nigeria. Matthew, another disciple of Jesus, belonged to the *Mikhsa*, the custom-house officials. He also renounced his immense wealth with all its fame and power to follow Jesus. Zacchaeus, the chief publican of Jericho, possibly belonged to this group. He also renounced his wealth on meeting Jesus. He said, "here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Lk. 19:8). In Nigeria today, customs officers command immense wealth, some acquired dubiously, from extortion and outright corruption.

⁴⁸ Norman Anderson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983, 139.

⁴⁹ George A. Buttrick, *op.cit.*, 128.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Confusion reigns! Not just hundreds but multiplied thousands vie for the attention of an increasingly skeptic and disappointed populace. The same selfishness that characterised the political scene has ignominiously invaded the church world. Economic greed, the love for money, is not only unchecked but un-rebuked, but also in a startling number of cases, provides the fundamental rationale for the formation of many churches.⁵¹

It is not an overstatement that the quest for wealth acquisition underlies most prosperity gospel preachers and the continuous mushrooming of Churches everyday. The Church today has become a haven where thieves of public funds, 419 fraudsters, drug barons and ritual murderers donate "blood money"⁵² to Churches in order to seek 'restitution' for their ill gotten wealth. These ungodly possessions have easily found their ways into some gullible purses of some Nigerian Churches. Such "money bags" are accorded much respect in some Churches. But this should not be so. Keener has reminded us that "Jesus exhorts us not to value possessions enough to seek them (Matt. 6:19-24), quite in contrast to today's prosperity."⁵³ Keener goes further to extol the virtues of John Wesley who said, "we give to God not by giving to the Church, but by giving to the poor,"⁵⁴ and throws a challenge that the world will be a different place if it's poor could share in the abundant resources of the wealthier Christians. This captures Francis Bacon's mood well when he rightly asserts that, "money is like muck, not good except it be spread."⁵⁵ This, to say the least, is set

⁵¹ A keynote address delivered by Gary S. Maxey at the NABIS Annual Conference on "Biblical principals as moral foundations for contemporary Nigeria," held at Wesley International Theological Seminary, Owerri, July, 1995.

⁵² The term, "blood money," is a popular reference in Nigeria to money got through dubious means, particularly, through ritual murders in which human parts are used for ritual purposes with the sole intention of making money.

⁵³ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew, op.cit.*, 147.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *op.cit.*, 135.

in contrast to what Phil Parshall has noted of some prosperity preachers such as Robert Schuller, Jimmy Swaggart, Oral Roberts and Jerry Falwell. Parshall has observed that these preachers live in expensive mansions, drive expensive cars and live expensive lifestyles amidst a multitude of people who live in hunger, deprivations and want. In fact, Robert Schuller charges as much as \$15,000 per speech in a crusade.⁵⁶ This practice is already gaining ground in Nigeria, contrary to what Jesus enjoined in Matthew 10:8, "freely you have received, freely give." Jesus' self-sacrificial life precludes a life of luxury, affluence and glamour.

It is a fact that the quest for worldly possessions is fraught with risks and desolation. The unending search for wealth accumulation isolates people from the realities of daily existence as it dehumanises people. Such people lose the sense of care, love, sympathy and mercy for their fellow human beings, attributes that make up true Christian character. The church today must be reminded that it was the evil of materialism which provided fertile grounds for Marxism to thrive and gain roots, with all its attendant consequences, even for the Church, for over seventy years. Proponents of prosperity gospel must shun the temptations of falling into the trappings of exalting man into a semi-god just as was the Marxist-humanist emphasis upon which Marxist fallacies were based. The obvious consequences of these false "theologies" are now part of history's garbage. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Marxist false utopia collapsed to the utter amazement and embarrassment of its proponents around the world, including its Nigerian advocates. Communism as a global phenomenon breathed its last with all its unfulfilled promises of a "heaven on earth". The materialistic church in Nigeria today could well be incubating a Bolshevik-type of revolution within its ranks in the future. The leadership quarrels and other crises within churches could well be the little indications for this impending scourge.

⁵⁶ Phil Parshall, *The Cross and the Crescent*, Illinois, Tyndale House Publishers, 1989, 128-129.

CONCLUSION

From our discussion so far, some very germane concerns have been raised. Jesus did not condemn wealth itself, but he condemned its use in very unwise ways. When wealth is acquired rightly but sets priorities towards achieving only man's pleasures, even at the expense of the poor, it is used unwisely, the kind many people practice today. It becomes foolish. Jesus said that is the height of folly. Wealth acquisition, which does not take care of the everyday human concerns of others, is brutal and inhumane. Leslie B. Flynn has captured the mood today quite well, when he notes,

Today, many interests vie for our devotion. Young and old alike are challenged by the call of money, education and fame, pleasure, and a host of other voices.⁵⁷

But Boice has warned that,

If you think about your home, car, vacation, bank account, make up or investments more than God, then you are serving Mammon and building treasures here on earth. According to Jesus, "Where your treasure is your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).⁵⁸

The Nigeria Covenant affirms that legitimate ownership of property is recognised and commended in the Holy Scriptures, but must be properly acquired and managed equitably for the good of all and for His glory.⁵⁹ As we re-evaluate our values and priorities toward attaining kingdom standards, the church in Nigeria needs to be reminded of Jesus' teaching in respect of wealth acquisition and not be consumed into the crazy chase for possessions which has led to all kinds of evil in the Nigerian nation. Perhaps this wise

⁵⁷ Leslie B. Flynn, *op.cit.*, 99.

⁵⁸ James Montgomery Boice, *op.cit.*, 109.

⁵⁹ *The Nigeria Covenant* is a product of the Congress on Christian Ethics in Nigeria (COCEN), whose sole objective is to re-direct Christian values in our national life. The "Covenant" was adopted at its meeting in Abuja on November 3-6, 1997, see pages 6,7 of the Document on the "Covenant."

counsel will suffice that, "those concerned with wealth become as sterile in their Christianity as those who forget their faith or fall away under persecution."⁶⁰ This, of course, is antithetical to Jesus' teaching in this regard. And as Lockyer has reminded us, "righteousness, not money, exalted a nation."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, 152.

⁶¹ Herbert Lockyer, *op.cit.*, 136.

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REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUAL MAPPING

Erwin van der Meer

Christian teaching on Spiritual Warfare is as old as the Scriptures. It was the Apostle Paul who admonished the Ephesian Christians to take their stand against the devil's schemes and to engage in spiritual warfare against the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:11,12). But today we are being led into extra biblical teaching when we are urged to participate in "spiritual mapping" in order to engage in strategic high level spiritual warfare. In this article Erwin van der Meer explores Spiritual Warfare in the history of the Christian church and then focuses on this new emphasis within some Christian circles.

The following article was submitted by the author as an assignment for a MTh programme in Missiology on 2 May 2000 at the University of South Africa under the supervision of Prof. J.N.J. Kritzinger. The bibliography on the subject of Spiritual Warfare at the end of the article is itself worth this issue of AJET.

INTRODUCTION

Missiology is concerned about God's mission in human history and the church's participation therein. Part of this concern involves monitoring and evaluating contemporary developments, movements and trends in the world and the world-wide church of today, in the light of the *Missio Dei*. It is in this respect that we need to focus our attention to an emerging trend within evangelical

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mission circles, called 'spiritual mapping' with its emphasis on strategic high level spiritual warfare against so-called territorial spirits, which has been increasing in popularity, predominantly among Pentecostal and Charismatic (Neo-Pentecostal) Evangelicals since the late 1980's.

Virtually all Evangelicals will agree with paragraph 12 of the Lausanne covenant which states that we are engaged in a constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate the task of world evangelisation (Stott 1996:44). Actually, the theme of spiritual warfare between the powers of good and evil, between Christ and Satan, can be found throughout the New Testament (Longman 1995:18-19; Page 1995:267ff), and more ambiguously in the Old Testament as well (81-82, 88). Also, the Christian Church, throughout the ages, has affirmed the existence of such malevolent forces and has been involved in spiritual warfare against the powers of sin, evil, and the demonic forces under Satan's command (Thigpen 1994:29).

However, what is termed today as spiritual mapping and strategic high level warfare, appears to go a lot further, in its assertions and practises, than what has generally been accepted by the evangelical movement at large (Gilbreath 1995; Stott 1996:231, 238), or has been practised throughout the history of the Christian Church (Lowe 1998a:86ff). The proponents of spiritual mapping, with its related doctrines concerning territorial spirits and the power of blessings and curses, seek to add a peculiar spiritual warfare dimension to evangelism and mission; without which, they assert, evangelism and mission will be, and has been, less successful (Lowe 1998a:11-12). Consequently, we are confronted with groups of 'prayer warriors' spending enormous resources of money, time and material to travel to some remote place in the world which is perceived to be a stronghold of opposing spiritual forces, in order to battle these hostile forces through intercessory prayer, confession and proclamation (Lowe 1998a:13; 1998b:57; Sjöberg 1993:106ff), and split open demonic clouds of spiritual darkness (Wagner 1995a:47) so that mission and evangelism will become more successful in that place or region.

THE NEED FOR MISSIOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As spiritual mapping is now gaining credibility among church leaders (Moore 1998:55), and becoming standard practise in many local churches and para-church organisations around the globe, it has become an issue which missiologists cannot afford to ignore. The validity of spiritual mapping, its presuppositions and claims, need to be evaluated in the light of Holy Scripture, and in the light of what the Church has recognised and affirmed throughout history. So far the movement itself has been spearheaded by evangelical missiologists such as C. Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft and several other evangelical theologians (Powlison 1995:33), and has been critiqued by some other missiologists and theologians. Yet, up to date most books and articles concerning spiritual mapping are written in popular style, with some of these in the form of best-selling novels among the laity (Peretti 1986; 1989), which makes scholarly interaction difficult. In this respect there is still a vacuum, waiting to be filled by theological and missiological contributions, critically examining spiritual mapping and its presuppositions concerning spiritual warfare.

Three useful works by evangelicals who recently engaged in a critical and scholarly evaluation of spiritual mapping and its related doctrines are: *Spiritual Power and Missions; Raising the Issues* (Rommen 1995), *The Holy Spirit and Mission Dynamics* (McConnell 1997), both published by the Evangelical Missiological Society (EMS), and recently: *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*, published by the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (Lowe 1998). However, in spite of these three insightful books and several helpful articles, the debate still goes on, and the need for further reflection is critical. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to provide a meaningful contribution to the current debate on spiritual mapping.

MEANINGS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

Trying to define spiritual mapping is not an easy task. The term itself was coined by George Otis in 1990 (Otis 1993:32). But it seems there are as many definitions of spiritual mapping as that there are books written about it. However, most of the proponents of spiritual mapping will agree that it is about sincere Christians who are trying to discern and overcome those invisible realities that influence the visible world, especially those that may hinder the success of evangelism and mission (Priest 1995:19). Cindy Jacobs, a well-known leader in the field of spiritual mapping, sees spiritual mapping in terms of researching a city to discover any inroads Satan has made, which prevent the spread of the gospel and the evangelisation of that city for Christ (1993:77).

In this context special attention is given to territorial spirits which are considered to be demonic forces, under the command of Satan, that keep a territory in spiritual darkness (Wagner 1989:278). The territorial spirits are able to keep a territory in bondage, because there is a legitimate reason, a right, for them to do so due to atrocities, evils or sins committed in the territory concerned (Dawson 1994:34; Frangipane 1991:55; Harmon 1999:36). Demons are also believed to gain control through curses that have been proclaimed (Sjöberg 1993:108-109; Wagner 1991:131; 1992b:130ff), or through the (past) worship of idols, other religions or ideologies (Caballeros 1993:145). These elements, or demonic entrances, need to be discovered and mapped out, through historical, cultural and sociological research, charismatic inspiration (Arnold 1994:47; Dawson in Archer 1994:57; Frangipane 1991:168), and at times by questioning demons who are in the process of being cast out from individuals (Kraft 1995:118-119; Priest 1995:28-29).

Equipped with 'spiritual' weapons, such as militant intercession (Kiesling 1994:26), the quoting of Scriptures, identificational repentance (Sjöberg 1993:108-109), proclamation of forgiveness or deliverance, and by verbally breaking curses or telling demonic forces to go, spiritual mapping is followed by spiritual warfare in an attempt to overcome the demonic powers

that hinder the progress of the gospel in the target area. In support of spiritual mapping and strategic high level spiritual warfare, proponents report an increase in converts, openness for the gospel, church growth, miracles and other spiritual successes (Kiesling 1994:26-27; Wagner 1989:282-284; 1991:133ff; 1992:162).

ORIGINS OF SPIRITUAL MAPPING

The term 'Spiritual Mapping' was apparently first coined in 1990 by George Otis, (Otis 1993:32), a former missionary with the Neo-Pentecostal evangelistic organisation, *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM). However, the underlying idea of ruling territorial demons, which may hinder the success of Christian witness in a certain geographical area, was expressed earlier by the third-wave¹ missiologists, C. Peter Wagner and Timothy Warner (Wagner 1989:278). Much earlier, around the 1920's, it was already suggested that intercessory prayer could remove the demonic strongman, i.e. "prince of China",² so as to pave the way for more effective evangelism (McGee 1997:83-84). In 1985 Bill Subritzky, in his book 'Demons Defeated' (1985:12-13), suggested that Satan places unseen princes and powers of the air over every nation and city with descending orders of authority all the way down to demons which walk on the ground and seek a home. These evil spirit beings are said to seek to rule over countries, cities and even over churches by bringing with them hordes of demonic powers such as envy, jealousy, unbelief, pride, lust and ambition.³

¹ The so-called third wave of the Holy Spirit movement, centring around Fuller Theological Seminary - School of World Missions, has a strong emphasis on signs and wonders, numerical church growth, evangelism and missions. Some of its well-known leaders include the late John Wimber, founder of the Charismatic Vineyard Churches, missiologists Charles Kraft and C. Peter Wagner, John White and Wayne Grudem (Powlison 1995:33).

² The idea of a demonic ruler or strongman keeping a nation under its hold is based on Daniel 10:12-20, as well as Deuteronomy 32:8 and Matthew 12:29.

³ The tendency to demonise or personalise the vices goes back at least to the inter-testamental period. Some examples can be found in the writings

The modern view of spiritual warfare up to this point in time had been primarily concerned with the influence of demonic powers on individuals and groups of individuals, rather than geographical location. From the 1980's onward several of the presuppositions and concepts which became incorporated in the practise of spiritual mapping during the 1990's, such as the territoriality of demonic powers, the influence of blessings and curses, and many other concepts, could be found among the missionaries of *Youth With A Mission* (YWAM). It is, therefore, not incidental that a missionary with YWAM coined the term spiritual mapping (Otis 1993:32).

Already, in 1986 one could find groups of intercessors wandering throughout Amsterdam in so called prayer-walks organised by YWAM, claiming the soil on which they walked for the kingdom of God and back from Satan based on Scriptures such as Joshua 1:3 (YWAM 1986). Through direct special revelation in the form of visions, prophecies or intuition, leaders would identify what evil spirits were at work in a particular part of town and the demons would be bound in prayer after they had been identified by name or function, based on Matthew 18:18 and Mark 5:8-10.

Several years later these ideas crystallised into a book by Floyd McClung, who had been one of YWAM's regional directors, based in Amsterdam at the time (McClung 1990:51-52). Less than a year before this publication, John Dawson, another international leader of YWAM, published his book, *Taking Our Cities for God* (Dawson 1989), outlining similar notions of spiritual mapping, high level spiritual warfare on behalf of cities and neighbourhoods. That same year evangelical missiologist C. Peter Wagner published his controversial article, 'Territorial spirits and world missions' in the *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly* in which he also draws on the experiences of YWAM missionaries, including the director of the organisation, Loren Cunningham (1989:283; also Wagner 1992b:149). The concepts and ideas that led to the development of

of the Qumran community [1 QM Col. xiii.11-12, 4Q510.5-6 (frag.1), 4Q286 frag.7 col. II. (in Martinez 1996)]. Also in Gnostic literature such as *The Teachings of Silvanus* and the *Apocryphon of John* (in Robinson 1988).

spiritual mapping within evangelical mission circles did not, however, originate in a contextual vacuum as a brief historical survey of the development of spiritual warfare in the Western world may demonstrate.

SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN CHURCH HISTORY UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY

A merely casual study on spiritual warfare throughout the history of the Christian Church will soon bring to light that the spiritual warfare had very distinct meanings at different times and in different contexts. The church fathers to some extent regarded Satan as the source of inspiration behind heresies and false doctrines (Stevenson 1987:93; Gokey 1961:70).⁴ Satan was also regarded as the source of inspiration behind the persecution of the Christian church (Stevenson 1987:60).⁵ Spiritual warfare against Satan's devices was a matter of polemics and apologetics. Yet, the apostolic fathers most frequently described the spiritual struggle, against the demons and evil spirits, in terms of individual souls wrestling with sinful passions and temptations (Stevenson 1987:200; Lightfoot & Harmer 1992:417).⁶ The church believed that the devil's forces of evil could be overcome through discipline, faith and common liturgical worship and prayer (Gokey 1961:71-72; Stevenson 1987:211). In some of the writings of the early church we see vices being personified as demons, while the virtues

⁴ Justin, *Apology*, 1.26. See also Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, 4-7; Chrysostom, *Letters of Chrysostom*, 31; Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius*, 2.

⁵ Justin, *Apology*, 1.5-6. See also *The Letter of Ignatius to the Romans*, 5-3; *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 2-7.

⁶ Origen, *De Principiis*, I, preface 5-6; *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Mandate* 12, 6:48-49. There are also many examples of this in other writings by Origen, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom and others, which are not mentioned here for the sake of space.

are portrayed as good angels, either residing in, or affecting, the heart, or the soul (Gokey 1961:16-17, 109; Hall 1991:181).⁷

Later writings, especially of Gnostic origin, reflect a preoccupation with nomenclature and hierarchies of rank in the demonic kingdom or army, with Satan as the supreme commander, under him demonic emperors and princes, under them the common demons (Greenfield 1988:234, 312). However, not just the alternative traditions, but also at one stage in the late Byzantine tradition there developed a tendency to regard every aspect of time and space to have its own proper demon and/or angel (Greenfield 1988:313). Such demonic rulers could directly be affected by human actions against them, provided that those involved in the battle had the right knowledge concerning the demonic nomenclature, systems and hierarchies at their disposal (Greenfield 1988:316).

Later during the Medieval period the preoccupation with hierarchies and nomenclature of demons seems to have faded away. However, the devil and his evil spirits felt very real to believers in this period and they tried to ward these off by making the sign of the cross (Latourette 1953:535). Generally, the response of the church to the demonic in this period may have been marked more by gross superstition and speculation (Unger 1952:4, 85) than by careful theological reflection. On the day of Rogations,⁸ priests would lead processions through the neighbourhood and the fields, carrying a cross, waving banners and ringing bells, in order to ward off evil spirits and demons (Lowe 1998:92). In the same period, the crusades against Muslims and heretical groups, such as the Albigenses (Gonzalez 1987:192), also reflect a tendency in the medieval church to regard spiritual warfare as a matter of physically fighting against evil on behalf of the church and

⁷ See for example *The Shepherd of Hermas-command 5,6*, (in Arnold 1979:281) or, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. The figure of speech which describes vices as demons residing or inspiring evil inclinations of the heart is also found in Zoroastrianism and in inter-testamental Judaism, and may have exerted some influence on the demonology of the early church.

⁸ The Rogation days are the three days before Ascension day.

Christianity. Quite often the battle was fought, not just on behalf of Christ and the Church, but also for an earthly ruler and his kingdom, as for example in the case of Charles Martel, and also Charlemagne (Hayward 1994:440-441; Latourette 1953:353).

Peoples resistant to conversion, such as the Wends and Prussians, or heretical groups such as the Cathari, were subjected to the sword (Latourette 1953:413). In the same spirit individual heretics were punished throughout the entire Medieval period, and from the 11th century onwards they were also executed (Gonzalez 1987:226-227). Bernard of Clairvaux, who was the motivating force behind what is known as the Second Crusade (Latourette 1953:411), justified the use of physical force against evil and heresy (Gonzalez 1987:225), as did many others. Later in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, Roman Catholic mystics, such as John of the Cross, Fransisco de Osuna and Miguel de Molinos, spoke of spiritual warfare as a matter of purifying the soul in order to be filled with God (Latourette 1953:853).

The Protestant reformers rejected many of the gross superstitions inherited from the medieval period. Martin Luther strongly condemned speculations concerning evil spirits and demons, without denying their existence or maliciousness (Lowe 1998:94-95). John Calvin also rejects the speculations of his day and age and portrays Satan and his angels as being permitted by God to tempt and war against believers with sinful temptations and inner disturbances, but they can be resisted by being steadfast in the faith (Calvin 1845:1.14:13-15). The main contribution of the Reformation concerning spiritual warfare was the rejection of fanciful speculations concerning the devil and the demons, and a renewed emphasis on the scriptural teaching concerning personal holiness and resisting sinful passions and evil temptations coming from Satan and his demons. That is not to say that the reformers were not guilty of some unwarranted speculation concerning Satan and his schemes, both Luther and Calvin referred to the Pope as being the Antichrist (Calvin 1845:4.7:24-25). Luther is also reported of having thrown an inkwell at what he thought was a manifestation of Satan (Christenson 1990:17).

Later reformed writings, such as those of the 17th century English writers John Bunyan and Downham, building on the theology of the Reformers and of St. Augustine, described the Christian life as a life of perpetual warfare against the evils and temptations of the devil, the world and the flesh (Muller 1980:319; Powlison 1995:35). Though, in contrast to St. Augustine, a transition had been made from the more objective imagery of two cities, the City of God versus the City of the World, to the subjective sense of personal pilgrimage and inward warfare against the devil and his schemes. The world is still the place of battle, but the protagonist is the human soul (Muller 1980:320), and the warfare is understood as spiritual and moral. Spiritual warfare had now become a highly individualistic affair, whereby each individual soul fights its own battle with temptation and sin. This attitude, consequently, led to an increased withdrawal by Christians from the world and involvement in its affairs.

There is little doubt that the individualism of the Renaissance, as well as enlightenment rationalism, influenced Reformed theology in this respect (Henry 1973:322-323). From the 18th century onwards the influence of the Enlightenment on Christian theology caused many believers and theologians to reject the concept of a personal devil and demonic powers as outdated and irrelevant in an attempt to demythologise Christianity (Page 1995:267; Powlison 1995:23-24).

The more conservative believers and theologians resisted the demythologising of Christianity and continued to emphasise the reality of Satan, and the need to resist his temptations in one's individual life. At the same time, the fear of Satanic conspiracies, aimed at world domination and the oppression of the faithful, became a common element in many conservative Christian circles. Among the conservatives in the New World some believed that a satanic conspiracy was in operation in the war of the British against the North American colonies (Patterson 1988:445-446). The Roman Catholic Church, the Illuminati, the Jesuits, the Masonic lodge, or sects such as the Latter Day Saints or the Watch Tower Society, have also been referred to as manifestations of the satanic conspiracy for world domination (Patterson 1988:446-448). A

century earlier, among the puritans in the New World, the infamous Salem witchcraft trials were the scene of fear, hysteria and confusion, when a satanic conspiracy against the 'Christian' New World was feared and the alleged perpetrators were hanged (Lampros 1994:303-305)⁹. It seems that since Salem, this fear for a satanic conspiracy continued to work on the imagination of many North Americans, even into the late 20th century.

A less speculative, though equally controversial, development started just before the end of the 19th century, when a book was published by John Livingstone Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary to China, under the title, *Demon Possession and Allied Themes* (Nevius 1968). This book set the precedent for many similar books to be published in the 20th century and describes the experiences of missionaries and believers in China in dealing with possession, harassment or deception of individuals brought about by demons (Nevius 1968:1-110)¹⁰. John Nevius presents a lot of anecdotal evidence throughout his book concerning various demonic afflictions and records how persistent prayer, the preaching of Scripture, the singing of hymns and simple faith in God was effective in overcoming these trouble causing demons. In his book Nevius also provides a biblical evaluation and justification of his experiences and those of his contemporaries (Nevius 1968:243-290). The writings of Nevius, and the reports of other missionaries as well, caused many evangelical theologians at home to re-examine their theology of Satan, demons and evil (Chafer 1919:68). Nevius also records several anecdotes concerning

⁹ The Salem Witchcraft Trials took place in 1692 at Salem, New England, in which more than 100 persons were accused of witchcraft and nineteen were convicted and executed (Lampros 1994:303; Noll 1992:51).

A recent book evaluating the tragic hysteria at Salem is Jeffrey J. Richards', *The Cry at Salem: The Witchcraft Trials of '92'* (Lake Geneva, WI: Farley, 1992).

¹⁰ Both John Nevius in the 19th century and Frederick Leahy can be regarded as pioneer thinkers who addressed demonic phenomena, without turning to casting out demons, or other spectacular power encounters (Powlison 1995:35-36).

demon possession and harassment in Europe, some of which reappear to in 20th century writings as well (Nevius 1968:111-132).

SURVEY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In the 20th century Satan and his demons received most attention within dispensationalist circles (Leahy 1975:7).¹¹ The existence, personality and power of Satan has extreme significance for the dispensationalist who expects Satan to organise a world-system which is anti-Christian in the last days (Scofield in Chafer 1919:iii; Lutzer & DeVries 1989:145ff). The two World Wars, with the horrors of nationalism, Nazism, militant communism, modern technological warfare and mass destruction, caused many Christians to reconsider the reality of Satan and his demonic powers (Unger 1952:xiii). Another contributing factor has undoubtedly been the revival of magic and witchcraft in the 20th century since the 1950's (Gardner 1954; King 1982:185-197), which obviously troubled many Christian believers (Unger 1971:17-18). The 'Cold War', that followed the devastation of World War II, also added fuel to various speculations and demonic conspiracy theories concerning an immanent anti-Christ in connection with communism, occultism and the so-called New Age movement (Patterson 1988:449-451).

Throughout their history premillennialist dispensationalists have been rather susceptible to conspiracy theories of history (Weber 1981:70), which can be attributed to their fairly pessimistic eschatology (Boettner 1958:350) with its emphasis on the total destruction of creation at Armageddon, after a satanic antichrist with his demon armies, and demonized followers, has made a final

¹¹ Dispensationalism arose in its modern form from the work of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). The theology that he promoted divided the Bible into separate dispensations, in each of which God is said to act from common principles, but varying mandates. Prophecy features large in dispensationalism, especially the efforts to perceive the divine plan of God for the end of the age, which according to many dispensationalists is at hand (Noll 1992:376-378).

attempt to thwart God's purposes (Chafer 1919:92, 109-110; Lutzer 1989:156-158; Unger 1952:190-191,200). Dispensationalists expect a world wide apostasy in Christianity which will result in a global pseudo-church under control of Satan or the Antichrist (Ryrie 1964:50; Lutzer 1989:113ff). Consequently, Dispensationalists have generally been very suspicious of the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Movement (Ryrie 1964:51-52; Barnhouse 1965:242-243; Livesey 1989:87ff, 124ff). The Antichrist could possibly even deceive believers and churches (Chafer 1919:135-140; Walvoord 1971:323-324) and needs to be resisted (Chafer 1919:70). Dispensationalism with its peculiar eschatology gained many adherents among Evangelicals in the United States in the period following World War II, notably in Baptist and Neo-Pentecostal circles. The 'Cold War' was without a doubt a major contributing factor with the threat posed by communism (Patterson 1988:450) in connection with the coming antichrist (Livesey 1989:86; Ober 1950:74-83). The Americans found themselves fighting in the Korean war, only to get caught up in the Vietnam war, and many other small localised wars in Middle-America and the Middle East. Everything seemed to indicate that the end was near.

Consequently, besides masses of apocalyptic and eschatological literature, also dozens of popularly written 'how-to-be-victorious-over-the-Devil' books were published in large numbers in the United States. These books were written to help individual believers prepare themselves against the schemes and assaults of Satan: *Spiritual Warfare* (Harper 1970), *The Adversary* (Bubeck 1975), *Born for Battle* (Mathews 1978) and many other books with fairly militaristic titles. Several other books were published in order to make the faithful aware of any new eschatological developments and satanic conspiracies in the world.

In the wake of the Middle East crisis in 1974, dispensationalist theologian, John F. Walvoord, published *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*. Hal Lindsay published his 'eschatological' best-seller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), speculating about the formation of a new Roman Empire comprising of ten core European nations, obviously with the European Community in

mind (Lindsey 1970:153-163, 184-185). Russia, China and the Middle East also play a major role in Lindsay's speculative eschatology.

The renewed popularity of the supernatural, the esoteric and even Satanism in the western world in the 1970's, combined with the rise of the so-called New Age movement, caused many Christians to ring the alarm bell (Christenson 1990:114; Van Dam 1988:35-36, 41-46). The last days now seemed to be very close at hand, for this is the period Satan would send his demons against believers more strongly and Christians must get ready for the battle (Bubeck 1975:15, 157). The New Age movement became the new focus of the watchmen of satanic conspiracies in the 1980s (Cumbey 1983:13ff; Livesey 1989, Marrs 1988; Patterson 1988:451-452)¹² ¹³. Several popular books were published, containing spectacular, personal testimonies of Christian ministers or missionaries who battled against and overcame demons at home (Henderson 1972; Dickason 1987:187-213) and in foreign lands (Peterson 1972)¹⁴.

Some personal testimonies concerning demonic bondage and deliverance were also published on their own (Blankenship 1972; Ernest 1970). Binding demonic influence, loosing people from demonic bondage, breaking demonic strongholds in people's life,

¹² Besides the books referred to in the text above, many others can be mentioned which reflect the same preoccupation with demons, satanic conspiracies and the like, such as Mark I. Bubeck's *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (Moody 1975), Hal Lindsay's *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1972) and *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon* (Westgate Press, 1980). Many other books on demons, exorcism, New Age, and spiritual warfare published since the 1950s reflect a similar preoccupation with the evil supernatural.

¹³ For an insightful and well informed article on the New Age movement in contrast to Evangelical Christianity see Norman L. Geisler's 'The New Age Movement' in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144, (Jan-Mar '87). Also Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (1986) and *Confronting the New Age*. (1988), both available from Inter Varsity.

¹⁴ Also see Moody Bible Institute, 1960. *Demon Experiences in Many Lands*. Chicago: Moody Press.

mind or family, deliverance from curses and aggressive warfare prayer, became key-concepts in the 'modern spiritual warfare' of Evangelical Christianity since the 1960's (Koch 1971:104-107).

Modern spiritual warfare has since been particularly popular among premillennialist Dispensationalist and those of Pentecostal or Neo-Pentecostal persuasion (Powlison 1995:32-33).

Most of the books about spiritual warfare, published since the 1950's, focus on how to tackle demonic influence in one's personal life or family (Robison 1991:53-72; Unger 1971). Special attention is given to the influence of curses, occult involvement, personal sin and the transference of sins of one's forefathers, as contributing to demonic bondage or affliction (Koch 1961:203-222; Dickason 1987; Wagner 1992b:129).¹⁵ Deliverance from demonic affliction is achieved by commanding Satan to leave the presence of the afflicted, with all his demons, combined with prayer to God (Bubeck 1975:140-141). The believer may verbally tear down what are called strongholds of the Devil and plans of Satan formed against his or her mind, emotions and body (Bubeck 1975:143-144). The believers may also renounce and repudiate the sins committed by their ancestors and verbally cancel any demonic activity, and any curse, coming along generational lines (Bubeck 1975:87, 148; Dickason 1987:278-279; Koch 1971:104ff; McNutt 1995:101ff). In the process of exorcising demons questions can be posed to them in order to find out what their names are, their ranks in Satan's hierarchy and what gave them the 'right' to enter or affect the afflicted person (Bubeck 1975:147; Dickason 1987:193-207).

If a believer has given Satan and his demons legitimate ground for them to harass him or her, such ground can then verbally be

¹⁵ Other influential books are Frederick S. Leahy's *Satan Cast Out* (Banner of Trust, 1975) and Lutheran theologian Kurt Koch's *Occult Bondage and Deliverance* (1971), *Between Christ and Satan* (1971), *Demonology: Past and Present* (1973), *Occult ABC* (1978), all published by Kregel, Grand Rapids. In the Netherlands and Germany the books by Dr. W.C. Van Dam have been influential: *Demonen eruit, in Jezus' Naam* (1973), *Mensen worden bevrijd* (1985), *Wezens uit onzichtbare werelden* (1993), all published by Kok, Kampen.

reclaimed by proclaiming it covered with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, after first having asked God for forgiveness of sins, committed by oneself or one's ancestors (Bubeck 1975:86-87, 100-101, 151; Dickason 1987:162-163). Prayer in the context of spiritual warfare is generally redefined, from communication with God, to becoming a spiritual tool by which victory is appropriated over demonic principalities and powers (Bubeck 1975:104; Christenson 1990:93-99). Demonic strongholds, and the influence of the powers of darkness blinding unbelievers for the gospel, are believed to be broken and defeated through what is called confrontational, or aggressive warfare prayer (Bubeck 1975:107; Christenson 1990:105-106). Satanic counter attacks are of course to be expected, and reports abound of Satanists 'praying' for the breakdown of Christian marriages (Wagner 1992a:68-70) or of pastors and spiritual leaders under supernatural attacks (Wagner 1992a:35-36; Wagner 1992b:81-84). Confession of sins is also considered an important factor for gaining deliverance from demonic affliction (Dickason 1987:291); even aggressively confessing the sins of others, who may be unable or unwilling to pray, in order to precipitate their deliverance and conversion (Bubeck 1975:113-114). Proclaiming demonic powers to be bound in the name of Christ is believed to undermine and even defeat the hold they may have on people (Bubeck 1975:112; Christenson 1990:157-164).

Besides an enormous amount of 'anecdotal evidence' to support the various beliefs and aspects of modern spiritual warfare, some biblical justification is also given in the form of isolated proof-texts.¹⁶ Portions of Holy Scripture like, Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Corinthians 10:5, and 1 Peter 5:8, are understood as teaching aggressive warfare against Satan and his forces (Bubeck 1975:71-

¹⁶ Viewed from a careful exegetical perspective, the use of Scriptures by most proponents of modern spiritual warfare can only be classified as abuse of Scripture with a disregard for what the Bible-writers sought to communicate. Also the use of isolated Scriptures without taking into account what the Bible as a whole teaches about God, Christ, Salvation and the demonic realm is unwarranted. A good example of this kind of abuse of Scripture is found in Bubeck's, *The Adversary*, pp. 103-107.

73, 103-107; Christenson 1990:72-75, 95-99, 111-112), breaking down demonic strongholds in peoples' lives (Robison 1991:73-83). Nehemiah 1:6-7 and Daniel 9:1-19 are referred to in respect to the effectiveness of confession on behalf of others (Bubeck 1975:113). The words of Jesus in Matthew 16:19, 18:18 and also 12:29 are interpreted as a matter of binding demonic powers and loosing people from their grip or influence or spiritual chains (Harper 1970:114-115; Christenson 1990:171), while James 4:7 is referred to in relation to verbally addressing Satan or demons (Dickason 1987:343).¹⁷ At times these techniques of spiritual warfare were also applied to deal with the alleged demonisation of buildings, places, (Christenson 1990:111; Harper 1970:105-107; Peterson 1972:25-30) and even objects and symbols (Burnett 1991:268-269; Priest 1995:4-6). It is in this context of modern spiritual warfare, with its various presuppositions and selective use of Scripture, that the practise of spiritual mapping has been developed within evangelical mission circles since the late 1980's.

EVALUATION OF SPIRITUAL MAPPING FROM A CONTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVE

Evaluating the modern concepts of spiritual warfare, including spiritual mapping, is not just a matter of biblical evaluation or of theological reflection, but is very much a matter of contextualization. We may well discover that the church, in the area of spiritual warfare, has become a captive itself, rather than setting the captives free. While we may admit that there is some merit and biblical justification for some of the aspects of spiritual

¹⁷ Commonly used phrases in modern spiritual warfare like: 'I break down Satan's strongholds', 'I proclaim the victory', 'I bind the powers of Satan', 'I loose any demonic influence', 'I pull down demonic strongholds', and similar expressions, reflect the ancient (partial) captivity of western culture and the western church, by the old barbaric European warrior tradition (Latourette 1953:414), with its glorification of individual heroes and great warriors, and may have its ultimate origin in ancient Indo-European mythology, rather than in the tradition of Holy Scripture (Hiebert 1994:204-208; Horton 1992:17ff, 337ff).

warfare¹⁸, we may well discover that in much of spiritual warfare the church has become captive to the Indo-European concept of the battle between good & evil (Hiebert 1994:204ff, Horton 1992:17ff). In the wake of World War II people have been desperately looking for power amidst a general feeling of powerlessness in the face of modern warfare, nuclear threats and technological and environmental disasters.¹⁹ Instead of being a transforming power in our societies today, many, especially within the evangelical segment of the church, have succumbed to the patterns of this world, which provide us with a mindset other than the mind of Christ and a biblical worldview. Instead of confronting the real powers that are at work in the world, including the powerful dominant modern scientific worldview with its sins and evils, much of the evangelical church keeps its spirituality in the unseen realm of private experiences without any real bearing on the realities of our context (Newbigin 1986:40).

This kind of neo-mysticism with its emphasis on the unseen and spiritual, does not stand in judgement of the modern materialist society, with its mechanistic and atheistic mindset. It is not a transforming force in society. Instead, it simply co-exists. By virtue of peacefully co-existing with the status quo, without challenging its evils, mysticism actually collaborates with the dominant powers. The mystics are like warriors waving swords into the air (1 Cor. 9:26) without defeating anyone or anything, except their purpose. The dichotomy between the private religious experience and the realities of the public world, is actually part of the dominant ideology of pagan western culture (Newbigin 1986:132ff). Consequently, faith has become a private matter concerned with personal salvation, an inward righteousness, morality and peace, without much concern for justice, righteousness

¹⁸ To maintain that exorcism has no longer a place in the ministry of the church because it reflects a primitive understanding of reality reflects more the presuppositions of a modern rationalistic mindset and neglects the experiences and teachings of the biblical text and church-history (Page 1995:179ff).

¹⁹ The revival of magic and the search for power in post-World War II western societies probably reflects the same trend.

and peace in the socio-economic and political realm. Mission then becomes a matter of individual private conversion and promotion of inward moral righteousness. Spiritual warfare then becomes a matter of battling those demons who allegedly hinder such conversion, or attainment of inward moral righteousness, rather than challenging the demon-inspired evil structures, false ideologies and idols in society (Wagner 1991:133). Yet, Christianity has always addressed the demon inspired structural evils and idols in its mission to the world (Newbigin 1986:95).

Therefore, the church in this present day and age, cannot afford to fight phantoms²⁰ and leave the idols that are served and promoted in our world unchallenged (Newbigin 1986:115ff). The world may indeed be enemy occupied territory, but he has no property rights. He is a usurper. We are not called to act as God's 5th columnists, carrying out commando raids (Bosch 1991:506), nor are we called to glorify individual hero's or knights who go out to challenge the dragons, or 'demonic windmills' like Don Quichottes.

We must, rather, act and live in this world in the affirmation that 'The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it' (Ps. 24:1), living out the victory already won by Christ. Spiritual warfare is, therefore, not a matter of power, for that matter has been permanently settled by God through Christ (Eph.1:16-23; Col.1:2:15), rather it is a matter of truth, love and reconciliation, of righteousness, holiness and peace, both individual and structural (Chester 1993:150ff).

²⁰ The early Christian church often viewed demonic manifestations as mere phantoms, appearances, causing people to view reality as not reality, and what was not reality as reality (cf. Origen, *Against Celsus*, 1:9, 4:40; Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, 2:4, 9:57).

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A MORAL DILEMMA

Tom Obengo

The wonders of modern medicine are truly amazing. Doctors can now operate without incisions and replace joints and organs with animal transplants or synthetic materials. Sometimes, it appears they can do most anything. But they can also pose moral dilemmas. This article, more precisely entitled, "The Moral Dilemma in Neonatal Care for Severely Imperilled New-Borns," raises the moral dilemma of whether one should sustain life of a severely handicapped new born baby. As Christians we need to think through the issues of life and death and who has final authority over the life of another, even a severely handicapped new born baby.

INTRODUCTION

Once in a while a severely handicapped baby is born who may be a victim of Down syndrome, spina bifida, anencephaly, hydrocephaly, Tay-Sachs disease, incomplete oesophagus or intestinal blockage. Down syndrome, commonly known as mongolism, is an abnormality of the twenty-first chromosome, the same chromosome which controls collagen (connective tissue) development. The neurones of an unborn baby with Down syndrome are like those of a normal infant. But about four months after birth, an excess of hydrogen peroxide in babies with Down syndrome causes apoptosis (neural cell death), leading to mental retardation.

Spina bifida is a cleft spine through which the membrane that covers the spinal cord protrudes. It is caused by the failure of the

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vertebrae to form over the back of the spinal cord, leaving the nerve unprotected. It usually occurs in the sacral or lumbar regions at the base of the spine, the final section of the neural tube to close. Tay-Sachs disease, also known as amaurotic familial idiocy, is a hereditary metabolic disorder causing progressive mental and neurotic deterioration, resulting in death in early childhood. The disease is caused by a recessive genetic trait and can be detected by prenatal tests. Victims may appear normal at birth, but become inattentive during the first few months of life. As the disease progresses, the child loses motor abilities already gained, such as crawling and sitting, and eventually is unable to raise its head. A cherry-red spot develops on the retina, and blindness and a general paralysis usually precede death (Micropaedia, 11:587).

Hydrocephaly is an accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain ventricles, causing seizures, mental retardation, and progressive enlargement of the brain, the skull, and the head due to fluid pressure. It may result from a congenital malformation blocking normal drainage of the fluid, or from complications of head injuries or infections. Untreated hydrocephalus carries a high mortality, but most victims are successfully treated by surgery to drain the fluid into the blood or abdomen (Micropaedia, 6:190). In anencephaly, the cerebrum is poorly developed or absent and the skull does not form. The condition is usually lethal and the affected foetuses are usually stillborn. Where the skull forms but the forebrain is missing, affected children may be born alive, but do not survive long. In cyclopia, the baby is born with a single central orbit, or eye socket, with or without the eye, and a tube-shaped nose is set above the orbit (Micropaedia, 8:620).

Left on their own for nature to take its course, most of such children normally die within a few days of life. However, due to technological advancement in the field of human medicine, it is possible to lengthen the lives of such infants, some of whom live well into adulthood.

An ongoing debate is on a few ethical issues on the intensive neonatal care for imperilled new-borns. Although many lives of imperilled infants are saved and lengthened, a number of them remain technology-dependent, and cannot in any way, interact with

the surroundings. Many remain handicapped for life and have to be on constant medication. The phenomenon has led some physicians and ethicists to question the validity of using modern medical technology to save such lives. The debate is on whether or not to use the prospective length and quality of life of an infant to judge the appropriateness of treating him or her. T

The author affirms the sanctity of life position and concludes that, no matter how badly human life may be scarred or disfigured, it is still in the image of God and deserves to be treated as sacred.

Another issue revolves around the uncertainty of medical judgement, since it cannot be ruled for certain that one infant will live longer or better than the other. Patients respond to various treatments differently. Whether treatment should be initiated on all, including those who will die, or whether only a certain category of potential survivors should benefit is an unsettled ethical debate. Then there is the question of consent. Who makes the decisions as to whether treatment may be withdrawn or sustained? Is it the parents, the physicians and nurses, the courts of law, or the state? Worldview conflicts come out strongly in the discussions. Should medical ethics be guided by secular humanist worldview, or should it receive guidance from the traditional Judeo-Christian perspective of human life?

These moral dilemmas are real for all Christians, especially those involved in the neonatal care of severely imperilled new-borns. Although no clear-cut lines may be drawn, certain Christian principles and guidelines may be proposed which may prove valuable to both physicians and ethicists. In this brief essay the author attempts to clarify these moral dilemmas, and make suggestions on the course of action to pursue.

LIFE VIEW: SANCTITY VERSUS QUALITY

In an effort to determine whether a particular new-born is worth the medical treatment or not, the decision makers are usually influenced by either a sanctity-of-life standard or a quality-of-life standard. Usually the quality-of-life arguments are derived from secular humanistic ways of thinking, while the sanctity-of-life

arguments are derived from the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview.

Richard B. Brandt (1996:177), in discussing the subject of defective new-borns, presents certain considerations which lead to his conclusion that, in some cases, euthanasia is the best thing to do. Brandt's conclusion is based on the prospective quality of life of the defective new-borns. In one of his considerations, he supposes a situation in which, as some times happens, that a child is hydrocephalic with an extremely low I.Q., is blind and deaf, has no control over its body, and can only lie on its back all day and have all its needs taken care of by others, and even cries out with pain when it is touched or lifted. Brandt uses the "happiness" criterion to conclude that such a life is not worth living because it is boring and uncomfortable. Such a child will suffer from "severe sensory deprivation" and not get any interesting stimuli, and should not be subjected to treatment which would prolong life.

The assumption in Brandt's case is that deafness, in addition to one's inability to care for oneself, are signs of a very low quality of life which must be terminated. Death is seen to be the baby's best interest, even if it is to be achieved through dehydration and starvation. This view of life is based on a false presupposition. It is founded on what Hans O. Tiefel (1985:154) calls "individualistic liberalism". In this view, in order to qualify as a person "one must have attained at least minimal capacities to reason, to speak, and to relate consciously to others". The unborn, the new-born, the retarded and the senile have no role to play in a society dominated by the philosophy of individualistic liberalism. Tiefel (1985:159) strongly presents the case in saying that such liberal expressions as "Every child has a right to a life free of suffering", are indeed, misleading. It only allows a choice of either life without any suffering, or death. Since, in the lives of the imperilled new-borns the former is unattainable, the latter must be the only possible choice.

In a Judeo-Christian world view, however, human life derives its significance from the fact that it is created by God. God the Creator and Sustainer of all human life, has directed humanity to love God and the human neighbour. The human neighbour

includes the unborn, the new-born, the retarded and the senile. It is a call to share in the divine responsibility of taking care of others. It is a call to bear one another's burdens, "particularly the weight of those who cannot shoulder anything" (Tiefel 1985:169).

Kathleen Nolan (1987:13), however, dismisses the sanctity of life standards as "... a vague slogan rather than a meaningful guide to decision-making". She presents "vitalism" as an extreme position in which the mere presence of a heartbeat, respiration, or brain activity is a compelling reason to sustain all efforts to save the child's life". She also dismisses strongly the medical indications policy in which each child possesses equal dignity and intrinsic worth and therefore should not be denied life-sustaining medical treatments simply on the basis of his or her "handicap" or future quality of life. Such treatment must be provided to all handicapped infants, except when the infant is judged to be in the process of dying, or when the contemplated treatment is itself deemed to be medically contraindicated (Nolan 1987:13). Nolan, instead, argues strongly in support of the quality of life position, on the grounds that external circumstances are crucially important in the outlook for certain new-borns and because of the increased stress families undergo in raising children with disabilities.

Quality of life standards ignore the intrinsic value of human life, and puts its regulation and control into human hands. Besides, there are reports of restoration to normal life. Edmund Santurri (1985:120) reports that,

Under certain circumstances – for example, some cases of spina bifida – postnatal therapy can restore the hope for a reasonably normal life. But much depends in such instances on the affliction's degree of severity, a matter which typically cannot be evaluated at the time of prenatal diagnosis.

According to Santurri (1985:121), an infant with Down's syndrome can be helped through the use of antibodies related to the condition, and with special education, can achieve a substantial measure of independence and in many cases do lead a long, often happy life.

Although a person's projected quality of life is important, treatment must never be denied on the basis of a prospective poor quality of life. Instead, society must learn to be responsible for every human life in their midst. The emphasis must shift from human rights to human responsibility. As long as the baby is not in the process of dying, he or she is entitled to medical treatment to relieve pain and to make his or her life comparatively better. And as long as the treatment is considered medically beneficial, it should be sustained. God must be trusted to make the right judgement as to when human life is no longer worth living.

MEDICAL UNCERTAINTY

Despite significant technological and professional advancements in the field of medicine, especially in relation to the neonatal care for imperilled new-borns, medicine remains a probabilistic profession. Decision making is, therefore, quite difficult for both physicians and nurses on the one hand, and parents on the other hand. Although modern neonatal care now includes the use of respirators, sensitive monitoring of biochemical parameters, and other upcoming medical technologies, uncertainties remain a real challenge. Nolan (1987:11) outlines three different approaches in response to medical uncertainty with regard to the treatment of imperilled new-borns.

Firstly, there is the the statistical approach as currently used in Swedish hospitals. This is an approach in which physicians or other decision makers make an across-the-board determination that infants fitting a particular statistical profile are unlikely to benefit from treatment. For such infants, treatment is never initiated at all, and they are left to die on their own. This approach sees the saving of severely impaired baby as the worst possible outcome which much be avoided at all costs. As Nolan accurately states it, "some babies will die who could have thrived, although doctors and parents will never know which individual babies they were".

Secondly is the wait-until-near-certainty approach which is commonly practised in hospitals in America. The practice is to begin treatment for every infant that is even potentially viable and

to continue active treatment until it is certain that a particular baby will either die or will be so severely impaired that parents could legitimately opt for termination of treatment. Unjustifiable death is the worst enemy in this case. The price for this policy, according to Nolan, is the keeping alive of some babies who might have experienced an early death "as the lesser of two evils".

Lastly, there is the individualised approach as practised in British neonatal units. The idea is to begin treatment for every infant, but to allow parents the option of termination before it is absolutely certain that a particular infant will either die or be too severely disabled to relate to the environment. This is the position favoured by Nolan who argues that it takes an intermediate route and "avoids identifying either undesirable result – unjustifiable deaths or severely impaired survivors – as necessarily the worst possible outcome" (Nolan 1987:11).

Nolan's second proposal of waiting until near-certainty is preferable here since it avoids passing early, and irreversible, death sentences on potential survivors. The struggle here is not merely that of keeping people alive for the sake of it, but that of constant monitoring of each individual infant's progress or regress. Once it is medically determined that the efficacy of medication is nil, and that the infant will eventually die, treatment can be terminated. In this way the responsibility of death is not in human hands, but in God's hands. In the process human medicine will have played its role of assisting the patient in life. This is the doctors ministry of compassion to the patient.

CONSENT AND DECISION MAKING

There have arisen incidents of controversy on who qualifies to decide on the course of treatment for an imperilled new-born. A case in point is reported by Teifel (1985:151) to the effect that in April 1982 in Bloomington, Indiana, a new-born baby needed surgery to repair his incomplete oesophagus so that he could eat. His parents denied permission for the operation and the baby died after six days without food or water. Despite Indiana laws on child neglect and discrimination against the handicapped, State Courts

upheld the parents in their refusal to permit treatment. Though it seems alarming, this case is not unique, for other children with intestinal blockages have at times also been denied surgery and have died slowly of dehydration and starvation. The Indiana case vividly illustrates the dilemma in which the physicians and nurses find themselves after a diagnosis of a case which needs surgery, an operation which they are willing to undertake. Their efforts are thwarted by both parents and the courts.

An incompetent patient, such as an imperilled new-born, may have no means by which to express his or her best interests. Sometimes it may be true that the interest of such a patient may be in not having his or her life sustained, but no one is sure. But even if they were to prefer death, certainly they would be interested in not suffering while dying. Helga Kuhse in her essay, "Death by Non-feeding: Not in the Baby's Best Interest" (1986:85), describes death from dehydration or malnourishment as "a most distressing way of dying". The decision to withhold all forms of feeding to the infant is as cruel and inhumane as it is inconsistent with principles of proper medical practice. What some regard as "beneficent euthanasia" in shortening the lives of imperilled infants may in fact be infanticide. A variety of suggestions have been made as to who should make such final decisions: parents, physicians and nurses, the state, the courts or law, or hospital ethics committees.

Parents are seen as the best decision makers regarding the life and well-being of a severely handicapped new-born. Parents are understood to be in possession of a natural love and tender devotion towards their own offspring. They are, therefore, most likely to choose the best options available for their children. Nolan (1987:17) agrees with this option and adds, "The ethical basis for according parents primary authority over decisions concerning medical care is rooted in the strong ties of affection and concern that parents have for their offspring".

However, parental decision making can sometimes be negatively influenced by their own individualistic good. Many a parent begets a child in order to attain some self-fulfilment and true happiness. A child provides a parent with the opportunity of passing on one's name. In the African world view, for instance, an offspring is an

assurance of the continuation of the existence of one's own lineage for generations to come. Having a child, in African communities, provides opportunity for the parent to attain ancestral status when they die (Obengo, 1997:46). A seriously handicapped new-born will frustrate all of these aims to a significant degree. It frustrates the parents' expectations of a perfect baby who is supposed to take up a role in the community through work, marriage, family life and other activities in order to ensure the survival of the family and clan.

The birth of an impaired baby shocks parents so much that the reaction is paralleled to the mourning of the death of a family member. Such a parent has so much emotional stress that he or she may choose an option which may turn out to be quite unethical. Parental decisions, in such circumstances, may focus more on the misfortunes of parents rather than the interests of the child and the child's Creator, God. In western families, parents may feel unable to have a social life because it is uncomfortable to have guests to a meal due to the unpredictable behaviour of the defective family member. Such fears may influence the decisions of some parents to have treatment of handicapped children withheld or withdrawn.

Due to the emotional stress parents go through upon the birth of a handicapped new-born, some ethicists propose that physicians and nurses be the only persons to make treatment decisions concerning infants. Physicians and nurses have had previous experience in dealing with such complex cases, and are less likely to be vulnerable to the stress and emotional turmoil parents experience at the birth of an imperilled new-born. In any case physicians are, by call, involved in a ministry of compassion to suffering humanity. However, doctors' and nurses' decisions are also, sometimes, influenced negatively to the disadvantage of the patient. Medical technology keeps getting better and the desire of some physicians is to employ the use of every available technology to its fullest extent. This has sometimes, rather than leading to a better condition in the patient, produced technology dependent human beings who have no interaction with the surrounding. Medical experimentation is another driving force behind physicians' decisions. Decisions by those in the medical profession

are still the best whenever accompanied by honest professional review of each patient's condition and prognosis.

The involvement of the state and courts of law are not normally appropriate in cases of this nature. Courts of law take long to make decisions, and by the time a decision is arrived at, certain events will have taken place in the life of the handicapped infant. Besides, judges and lawyers normally do not possess the professional competence on the intricate details of each individual patient. Their tendency is to generalise on the basis of past experiences and judgements.

In countries like the United States of America, hospitals have come up with ethics committees whose main responsibility is to make treatment decisions on patients such as imperilled new-borns. Ethics committees work with consensus and with first-hand information available. The only problem which may be experienced by such committees is the bureaucracy involved in organising for meetings and arriving at decisions.

It is the author's opinion that treatment decisions be made after thorough consultations among parents, doctors and nurses, as well as a hospital's ethics committee. Such an arrangement helps in the management of accurate information provided to the parents by medics and verified by an independent ethics body. And rather than stipulate regulations on who receives treatment and who does not, each handicapped new-born must be evaluated independently. As Paul Ramsey has put it (Nolan 1987:13), treatments may be compared in order to see which will be medically beneficial for a child, but abnormal children may not be compared with normal children in order to determine who shall live.

WORLDVIEW CONFLICT

An undeniable rift exists in bioethical scholarship between the Judeo-Christian worldview and the secular-humanist worldview. This rift is based on a few basic presuppositions which influence the views presented by each worldview. For instance, the traditional Judeo-Christian position has always recognised that healing is the preserve of God alone, and that all medical

professionals are merely his servants, whether they recognise it or not. Whereas the Judeo-Christian perspective holds that man is a special being created by God, the secular-humanist ideology is of the opinion that man evolved from animals. This difference in the basic presupposition makes the former to stand strongly for the sanctity-of-life principles, over against the quality-of-life principle held by the latter. In the final analysis, it boils down to who is sovereign over human life: whether God is or human beings are.

The conflict is not an easy one to resolve, and may require the theological ethicists to stretch into the realm of apologetics in order to effectively evangelise and influence the secular-humanist world of scholarship. Such an endeavour has to, however, be carried out with respect and sincerity on the part of the Christian ethicist. It is a show of insensitivity to impose a Christian opinion on another human person whose entire security is bound up in his or her belief structure.

But a good beginning is for Christian doctors to have a proper understanding of their calling as a divine one. The science of medicine must not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to glorify God in ministry to patients. As Peter Chapman (1997:88) has expressed it, "Christian doctors equip themselves with the best that scientific medicine can offer and pour out these painstakingly acquired skills in ministry of compassion". The Christian doctor must not allow the technological sophistication of modern medicine to distance him or her from the patient. Instead, the patient must constantly be viewed as a person and not merely as a case.

The Christian doctor must be careful enough to leave room for God's specific supernatural intervention in the form of miracles. Even when dealing with hydrocephalus, Down syndrome, spina bifida, or other difficult impairment of a new-born, God's intervention should still be expected. Chapman (1997:90) quotes Martin Lloyd-Jones to have cautioned, "God can work miracles today as he has done in the past ages. We must not exclude dogmatically, as we have often tended to, the manifestation and demonstration of the power of God to heal disease.". Martin Lloyd-Jones cannot be described as part of the "enthusiastic fringe" by any stretch of imagination. His caution should enable us to exercise

care. Of course the disappointment, disillusionment and despair brought about by the exaggerated claims of false faith healers has caused some to be sceptical of any possibility of God's healing of difficult cases. However, we must be careful, lest we throw away the baby with the bathwater.

God's command to love the human neighbour extends to the severely handicapped as well. The afflicted must not be expected to bear their share of the society's burdens in addition to their individualised suffering. Caring for the imperilled new-borns comes with significant portion of suffering reflected in the emotions of family members, huge financial expenditure, and physical stress. But that is our share of the cross of Christ in a paradigmatic way.

CONCLUSION

Neonatal care for imperilled new-borns is a human responsibility which we must carry out, despite the moral dilemmas and financial implications involved. Human life would be much easier without any handicapped new-borns to take care of, and that is what we would appreciate. But human life is full of reflections of imperfection. The author is not insisting that every imperilled new-born must be kept alive indefinitely. Instead he proposes that honest medical diagnosis and prognosis be the basis upon which treatment may be initiated, continued, withdrawn or withheld. The sanctity-of-life principle, though not appealing to the secular-humanist ethicist, must remain a key guiding principle among theologically informed medical professionals. It is, therefore, significant that all imperilled new-borns be beneficiaries of treatment, until medical evidence rules them out, or until parents legally withdraw consent for continued treatment. And in cases where treatment must be withdrawn, the child's handicapped nature must never be the determinant factor. Decisions regarding treatment should be made by physicians, parents and small ethics committees in hospitals. Above all, it is important to uphold human life as God's special creation over which he has the sole prerogative in ending. In addition, his supernatural intervention must never be ruled out. If a half a loaf of bread is better than none at all, handicapped life is

better than the escapist's death alternative. Christian ethicists and physicians must get involved in persuasive discussions with secular-humanist medical professionals and present a strong case for the sanctity of life ethic.

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CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

Part I

Bulus Y. Galadima

and

Yusufu Turaki

Nigeria is one of the leading nations in the Continent of Africa, politically but also in Christian witness. Christianity is making remarkable strides, not only in numerical growth but in deepening theological maturity of many outstanding leaders. This two-part article on "Christianity in Nigeria" traces the historical development of the church, focusing on the relationship of the Church with Islam and politics. Dr. Bulus Galadima and Dr. Yusufu Turaki presented the following paper at the African Theological Fellowship Continental Conference at the Akrafi Christaller Memorial Centre in Akropong, Ghana. In this first part of the paper on "Christianity in Nigeria", the authors describe the historical and social background of Nigeria and then the ways in which the church was planted among the various peoples. Part Two will appear in the next issue of AJET.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses the Nigerian State (Islam, Christianity and Politics) and the experience of the Nigerian Church since 1841 to the present. The year 1841 was the beginning of modern mission work in Nigeria led by Bishop Ajayi Crowther. Bishop Ajayi Crowther was a slave taken from Nigeria. He was later freed by the British abolitionists on the high seas and was taken to Sierra Leone. It was there that he became a Christian and was trained as a clergy in Sierra Leone and Great Britain. He became the first African to be consecrated Bishop on the West Coast of Africa. Thus, it is important to state the significance of the relationship between slavery and the beginning of modern Christian missionary activities on the West Coast of Africa.

First, this paper states very briefly the historical and social background of Nigerian society within which Christian missions carried out their activities in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The theory and practice of Christian missions, i.e., missionary activities, which formed the foundations of the Nigerian Church are then presented. This provides a background to our understanding of the nature, structure, theology, practice and the relationship of the Nigerian Church to both society and the State.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

This section describes very briefly the historical and social background of the Nigerian society and State. The socio-political setting of the Nigerian society and State can be divided geographically and culturally into two broad major areas: (1) the North; and (2) the South. This classification forms the basis for understanding Nigeria's historical ethno-regional politics, cultural and religious conflict, and socio-political, moral and ethical problems. The early work of Christian missions and the emerging Church confronted the challenges posed by some very powerful social factors, namely the traditional and Islamic factors, and the Colonial Administration. Thus, it is important that we understand some historical, geographical, political, cultural and religious

factors which have contributed in shaping and defining the nature of the Nigerian Church.

Southern Nigeria: Southern Nigeria can be divided into two broad societies, namely, Western and Eastern societies.

In the West, the Yoruba and the Edo, just like the Hausa-Fulani in the North, had centralised political, administrative and judicial systems, which were controlled by traditions. Where Islam existed in the West, it too came under the powerful influence of traditional values.

The Western coast of Nigeria came under European influence in the 15th century, especially through the early contacts of the Portuguese with the kingdoms of Benin and Warri.

This part of West Africa was named the Slave Coast because of the slave trade introduced by Europeans in the 17th century. This obnoxious trade caused inter-ethnic wars, depopulation and instability in the region until the British colonial rule in the 19th century when Lagos became a Crown Colony in 1860. Modern Christian missions entered Yorubaland by 1840s.

The Fulani warriors and Jihadists had their base at Ilorin, the northern edge of Yorubaland and raided the Yorubaland in places as far south as Oyo, Ibadan and Abeokuta. That was how Islam was first introduced into Yorubaland. In western societies, Islam, Christianity and traditional religions have co-existed harmoniously, unlike in the North.

In the East, the Igbo, Efik and others, just like the peoples of the Middle Belt of Nigeria, did not have centralised political, administrative or judicial systems as did the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Edo. This area, like the West, also came under European influence, especially during the period of slave trade. Important city-states such as Opobo, Bonny and Brass in the Delta Region grew and became powerful, as did Calabar in the Cross River Region. Arochukwu and Onitsha became powerful trade centres in Igboland. As it was in parts of the Western region, the slave trade introduced by Europeans caused inter-ethnic wars, depopulation and instability until the colonial rule in the late 19th century.

Christianity entered the region in the 1840s and grew more rapidly than in any other region. This region was followed by the

Middle Belt in the rapid growth of Christianity. The traditional values, however, had a very powerful influence on Christianity. Islam did not enter the region until after the civil war in the 1970s.

Northern Nigeria: Northern Nigeria can be divided into two large regions consisting of two broad ethnic groups: The Northern part, known as Hausaland and Bornu, which was composed predominantly of Muslim groups; and the Southern part, known as the Middle Belt, which was predominantly traditional and made up of largely of the non-Muslim groups. The major ethnic groups in the Northern part are the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri of the old Kanem-Bornu Empire, while the southern part consists of well over 250 ethnic groups concentrated in Plateau, Bauchi, Southern Kaduna, Adamawa, Sardauna (former Northern Cameroons) and Benue areas. The relationship between the Muslim groups, in the Hausaland and Bornu, on the one hand, and the traditional groups, in the Middle Belt, on the other, was characterised by slave-raiding, slave-trading and wars of territorial expansion before the British occupation of Northern Nigeria in 1900.

Arab influence was very strong in this region especially in slave trade. The irony of the era was that while the Europeans were plundering the West Coast with slave trade, the Arabs were doing the same in the Hinterland (Sudan). The Middle Belt region was plundered for both European and Arab slave traders. Christianity entered the West Coast of Africa where slave trading and slave raiding abounded.

The Middle Belt: In mission and colonial records, the inhabitants of this area were usually referred to as "Pagans". The bulk of the work of Christian Missions in Northern Nigeria was in this area until the early 1930's, when the Colonial Administration lifted the ban barring Christian Missions from entering the Muslim Emirates of the Hausaland and Borno, with the exception of the Zaria and Bida areas, where the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was stationed before the consolidation of colonial rule over Northern Nigeria.

Linguistically, the traditional peoples of the Middle Belt were classified as Benue-Congo or Semin-Bantu. They exhibit similar characteristics in culture, language, religion, customs, physical

features, social values and organisation. This probably indicates that in the distant past they might have had the same origin. Comparative linguistic analysis in this region would shed more light on the past history of these peoples. Their socio-political organisation lacked centralized authority, administrative machinery and constituted judicial institutions but was based upon democratic and consensus principles.

The contacts of these societies with the Hausa-Fulani, the Colonial Administration and Christian and Muslim missions, especially in the colonial era, brought about rapid social changes and transformation. Indeed, the impact of Christianity, Western civilisation and Islam upon the traditional societies of this region has been quite substantial and profound.

The Far North: The Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri in the Far North have been in contact with the outside world for many centuries. This is because, for centuries, Hausaland and Borno were under the profound influence of Islamic and Arab civilizations. In the Western Sudan, ancient empires, such as Mali and Songhai, introduced Islam, education, commerce and political institutions which contributed a lot in stimulating socio-political development in Hausaland and Borno. Links with North Africa, Egypt and especially the Maghreb, strengthened economic, religious, social and cultural ties with the Hausaland. The rise of economic, political and cultural power of the Hausa States and Borno brought them fame in the Arab, Mediterranean and Western worlds. Travellers, scholars, Muslim missionaries and merchants from these lands visited the Hausaland and Borno.

At the end of the 18th century, the Fulani or Fulbe moved into Hausaland in large numbers and later became the religious and political rulers of the land after the Jihad of Usman dan Fodio in 1804, and which successfully overthrew the Hausa Kings. Islam and Fulani rulers were in consequence imposed upon Hausaland.

Given its recognisable civilisation, the Hausa, as a distinct ethnic group in Northern Nigeria, attracted the interest of scholars, statesmen and religious men throughout the Middle Ages. Fascination about the Hausaland lured Europeans in the form of the colonial adventures and Christian missions.

There were some major socio-political differences between the Muslim and the Traditional groups in the North which had important implications for both mission and colonial policies. The Muslim groups were united together not only by Islam and Usman dan Fodio's Jihad of the early 1840's, but also by the assimilating power of Hausa language and culture, as well as the Sokoto Caliphate structure which covered a vast land across the northern parts of the Central Sudan of West Africa. Conversely, the traditional religions of the peoples of the Middle Belt were mainly particularistic and local and far-removed from the universalism of Islam. The numerous languages and dialects of the peoples of the Middle Belt did not have any assimilating power or wide influence like the Hausa language which was increasingly becoming a trade language in the Central Sudan. Briefly then, these peoples did not have any unifying ideology like Islam or the assimilating power of Hausa language and culture.

The Middle Belt did not have any centralised authority, administrative machinery, or judicial and fiscal institutions covering vast areas and cutting across ethnic or geographical boundaries. These segmentary societies were just like "mini republics" which did not have a common ethnic identity, authority or legitimacy. Each "republic" (tribe) was a confederacy of communities and villages based upon lineage and kinship systems. Each lived on its own and was independent of others because the sense of "tribal" affinity and unity excluded all those who did not belong.

The rise of Islamic power in Northern Nigeria drastically changed the socio-political conditions and the nature of inter-ethnic relationship, especially between the Muslim and the Traditional groups. Islamic ideology represented "universalism" while the traditional African religions and culture in general represented "particularism."

The Jihad, which generated Islamisation, colonisation and slave trade and slave-raiding, also introduced the religious and social stratification between the Muslim and the Traditional groups. Thus, the pre-colonial inter-ethnic relations between the Muslim

and the Traditional groups were, to a large extent, determined by religion.

It was upon these two broad-based distinct societies of Northern Nigeria that the Colonial Administration imposed a colonial structure. In 1900, the same administration had imposed a colonial superstructure over the two Protectorates of Nigeria, namely, Southern and Northern Protectorates.

Christian missions also carried out their mission work within these two broad societies in the North. The Church in Northern Nigeria was born within three powerful contexts: (1) the traditional context, mainly in the Middle Belt areas; (2) the Islamic context, mainly in the Far North; and (3) the colonial context of British rule over the whole of Nigeria.

This northern context had been transformed by the Colonial Administration and Christian missions. The consequences of this transformation in post-colonial Nigeria have influenced greatly the nature of politics and religious conflict in Nigeria.

From the previous sections, we have identified four very important social factors in the history and making of Nigeria worth mentioning, namely, traditional, Islamic, colonial and missionary. These have had profound influence on the nature, growth and development of Nigeria as a nation and as well as the Church. These geographical, cultural and religious factors have greatly affected the nature of politics, the State and the Church.

THE FOUNDING OF THE NIGERIAN CHURCH

This section examines briefly two aspects of the founding of the Nigerian Church: (1) the arrival of Christian missions; and (2) the theory and practice of Christian missions (activities).

Arrival of Christian Missions

This section does not intend to give a detailed history of missionary evangelisation of Nigeria. This has been adequately treated by many Church historians. Early missionary activities began between 1472 and 1621 when the kings of Portugal launched pioneering missionary enterprise in the Kingdoms Benin and

Warri. This primary attempt did not yield any lasting fruit. Similar attempts were also made at entering Borno and Hausa lands by Catholics and Protestants alike, but this too failed.

The story of modern missions in Nigeria began with the freed slaves in the Americas and Great Britain. They became the pioneers and the instruments of spreading and building Christian missions on the West Coast of Africa, especially in Yourubaland, the Niger, and Cross River. One of such freed slaves was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

It suffices to present a list of the most important pioneering Christian missions in Nigeria (Foxall, p. 257):

Wesleyan Methodist, 1842
Scottish Presbyterian, 1842
Church Missionary Society, 1844
Southern Baptist Foreign Mission, 1850
Roman Catholic Mission, 1961
Sudan Interior Mission, 1893
Sudan United Mission, 1904
United Missionary Society, 1905
Seventh Day Adventist, 1914
Qua Iboe Mission, 1932
Assembly of God, 1939
African Church Movements, 1888-1925.

By the 1970's, there were more than 50 Mission Agencies which operated in Nigeria. As a result of the work of many Christian missions, Christianity has grown and become one of the dominant religions in Nigeria. Over 45% of the population of Nigeria embraces Christianity.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodist and the Baptists pioneered mission work in the West, while the Presbyterian, the Catholics, and the Qua Iboe Mission pioneered the work in the East. Christian missions in Southern Nigeria began in 1842 with both the Scottish Presbyterian in Cross River and the Wesleyan Methodist in Abeokuta and Badagry.

The early development of Christian missions in the Niger Territories in the hinterland began, in earnest, with the Church

Missionary Society based at Lokoja. The work of this mission dates back to the great influences of Sir William Wilberforce in his successful campaign for the abolition of slave trade in the British Empire which came into effect in 1807, and also that of Sir Thomas F. Buxton who continued in the footsteps of Sir William Wilberforce, the great abolitionist leader. A society was formed in Great Britain, *The Society for the Extinction of Slave Trade and the Civilisation of Africa*, under the leadership of Sir Thomas F. Buxton. This society was very concerned about the effective abolition of slavery on the West Coast of Africa, particularly the Slave Coast (Coast of Nigeria) and was successful in persuading the British Government to send out an expedition on the Niger River to establish alternatives to slave trade, the legitimate trade.

In 1841, the British Government commissioned three ships, the *Albert*, the *Wilberforce*, and the *Soudan* to explore the Niger with the view of establishing trade relations with the states of the Niger Territories in the hinterland so that legitimate trade could supplant slave trade. This was to be accomplished through the "Industrial Mission" concept which emphasised the establishment of industrial farms for agriculture and the general social welfare of the communities. This mission was headed by Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a freed slave from Sierra Leone and was also accompanied by Rev. Schoen.

Later, a schism crippled the Mission. Conflict arose between those missionaries who were sympathetic with African culture in their missionary approach and those who believed in applying whole sale European culture in their approach to Africans. The pro-European culture broke away and founded the Sudan Party which was exclusively European. But this group did not advance into Hausaland beyond Lokoja and was disbanded in 1893. The pioneering missionary work was done mainly around Lokoja and the Nupeland in Central Nigeria.

Generally speaking, Christian missions and the colonialists advanced into Central Nigeria almost simultaneously during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. During the same period, the Royal Niger Company was given a Charter by Great Britain in 1886 to trade on the Niger and make treaties with the

states of the Niger Territories. In December of 1898, this charter was withdrawn and Great Britain declared a Colonial rule over the Niger Territories on First January 1900, and at the same time a Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was brought under the command of a young "colonial cadet", Lieutenant-Colonel Frederick D. Lugard, and who became the First British High Commissioner.

By the end of the Victorian Age, (1832-1900), missionary work had started already in other parts of the world, such as, China, Japan, Korea, India, South Africa and other parts of the world, except the Sudan (Central Nigeria). Both in England and North America, the theme, "The Sudan, the worst manned mission field in the whole world" was beginning to ring louder and louder in many missionary conferences, especially the Keswick conventions in England and later Canada. During the same period, the Student Missionary Movement was beginning to have a strong influence on the need of global evangelisation in North America and Europe.

Furthermore, during this same period, the anti-Islamic sentiment was quite high in Europe and North America within Christian circles. Islam was viewed as the greatest social evil which threatened the survival of Africa, in particular. The challenge for Christian missions was of two kinds: (1) to stop the spread and influence of Islam in Africa; and (2) to win Africa for Christ before it was too late. However, the Sudan, the coveted mission field was not an easy mission territory for Christian missions from Europe and North America. It was located in the hinterlands which made it difficult for European missionaries to reach. It involved high risks – "Africa the white man's grave." But the part of the Sudan that was particularly attractive was the Hausaland in Central Sudan. Hausaland (Northern Nigeria) was well known in England and Europe at this time. The accounts of Mungo Park, Richard Lander, the travels of Clapperton, Henry Barth, and other travellers from North Africa were quite well known to the European and North American general public, especially the merchants, explorers, colonialists and missionary societies. Hausaland for centuries had aroused curiosity in Europe, and the Middle East, and much later, the colonial, missionary and the explorers and merchant circles.

In 1892 the Hausa Association was formed in Great Britain. It sent Canon C. H. Robinson to study Hausa at Tripoli in 1892 and later in 1894 he travelled to Kano. In 1897 a small party of CMS missionaries left England and travelled to Tripoli to study Hausa. In 1899 this small party arrived in Nigeria under the leadership of Bishop Tugwell. At this time, the British Government was about to proclaim a Protectorate over Northern Nigeria as mentioned earlier. This party went to Kano against the wishes of Lt. Col. Frederick Lugard. Dr. W.R.S. Miller, a medical doctor, became the director of the Hausa Mission. The Mission at first settled at Girku (South of Zaria) and then moved to Zaria.

The Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) and the Sudan United Mission (SUM) were also born out of this "Burden of the Sudan." This time not from an ecclesiastical organisation as the CMS of the Church of England or like other Church Mission Boards, such as, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Catholics in the South, but from Faith Missions and certain individuals who felt the burden of the Sudan. In 1893, three individuals, Thomas Kent, Walter Gowans and Rowland V. Bingham raised funds privately in Canada and England and journeyed to the Sudan. Two of them died in the Sudan leaving Bingham who continued the work. In 1900, Bingham arrived in the West Coast with Albert Taylor and A.J. Moline but had to return home. In 1901, the Sudan Party came out with E. Antony, Charles Robinson, Albert Taylor and Alex W. Banfield and late in 1902 Dr. Andrew P. Stirrett joined them at Pategi in Nupeland.

The challenge of the lack of missionary work in the Sudan had consumed Dr. Karl Kumm, a German and the pioneering founder of SUM. He went to England in 1902 after his earlier failures to enter the Sudan through Egypt. He helped the founding of the Sudan Pioneer Mission, later known as the Sudan United Mission (SUM). In 1904 this mission entered the Sudan with Kumm and his wife Lucy, Dr. Bateman, Burt and Maxwell.

Thus, by the end of the Victorian Age, the evangelical mission societies had succeeded in sending Christian missionaries to the Sudan under "The Burden of the Sudan" and the mission "interior" concept.

The beginning of Christian missions in Northern Nigeria was given much prominence because of its significance in shaping and highlighting colonial and State policies towards Christian missions and the Church, on the one hand, and the approaches of Christian missions and the Church to the Colonial Administration and the State. Furthermore, it defines the socio-political implications of the work of Christian missions within the (1) traditional; (2) Islamic; and (3) colonial contexts and the role of the Church in modern Nigeria.

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Christian missions have played a significant role in the transformation of African societies in modern history. The transforming of African societies through various missionary activities has become a major contribution of Christian missions to modern social history of Africa. The work of Christian missions has become an integral part of Africa's social history. The theory and practice of Christian missions which effected social formations and transformations can be summed up in its humanitarian ministries and services, such as, (1) educational programmes and institutions; (2) medical work, services and institutions; (3) literature work, programmes and institutions; (4) planting of mission stations and churches; and (5) other forms of spiritual, moral and social development of peoples and societies. Christian missions held a dominant position as leading pioneers in education, the fight against illiteracy and ignorance; medical work, the fight against various physical human ailments, diseases and epidemics. The theory and practice of Christian missions can be studied from the following missionary activities. These activities did have a profound influence on the nature of church structures, theology and philosophy and patterns of relationships and approaches to (1) African tradition, culture and religion; (2) Islam; (3) colonial policies and other socio-political issues. Thus the nature and the role of the Church within the State are defined and shaped by these experiences.

Planting of Mission Stations, Churches and Institutions

Christian missions used the strategy of founding mission stations, out-stations, churches and institutions as means of occupying and entrenching their presence in a vast African territory. The mission station played significant role as being the centre and focus of missionary activities in the Mission Field. Mission stations and out-stations grew to become centres of mission and church activities. The emergent Church structures in the Mission Field took root from the pattern of mission stations and out-stations. The Mission administered churches, institutions and general missionary activities from the mission station. Patterns of church administration and structures, policies and practices which were developed by Christian missions were passed on to nationals by the missionaries.

The politics of creating dioceses, or districts and their headquarters, church offices and officers and titles of clergy draw a lot from the missionary legacy. The Church today spends so much time, energy and resources on these matters. Schisms, crises, conflicts and tensions caused by these issues have in one way or the other affected most churches in Nigeria. This phenomenon alone can occupy most of our time.

Education Ministry

Christian missions pioneered western education in Nigeria. Their educational programmes were such as: Literacy Programmes; Classes for Religious Instruction; Sunday School and Catechism Programmes; Elementary and Primary Education; Teacher Training and Secondary Education Programmes; and Theological Education and Training Programmes. The bulk of educated civil servants and professionals had their humble beginnings from mission education programmes and institutions. Christian missions pioneered education where the Colonial Government and Native Authorities could not provide such for their subjects.

The major contributions of Christian missions in the area of education has been literacy, social, moral, and spiritual up-bringing and general development of the peoples and societies. Education was the most potent tool for the transformation of African societies

and also the most effective tool of evangelism. More people became Christians through the mission ministry of education than any other means.

Even though Christian missions pioneered western education, most mission societies did so very reluctantly. Theological or Christian education was more favoured than general (secular) education. Most missionaries during the pioneering periods were anti-intellectual and modernity and this affected the quality and mission education policies. Education for some mission societies was narrowed down to the popular three R's (Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic) and Bible Knowledge and anything beyond these was "worldly". The fear of too much education, modernity and worldliness dominated much of mission education policies. This fact has adversely affected the concept of education and its administration by the Church.

The State take-over of mission and church schools in the late 1960's and the early 1970's was motivated by the assumption that the mission or the Church cannot provide "neutral education" as its education is nothing more than Christian "propaganda."

This dualistic conception of education as "secular" and "spiritual" has affected both State and Church policies towards education. After the State take-over of schools many churches turned their focus on Theological Education.

A wholistic Christian approach to all aspects and disciplines of education and not only theological or spiritual is a great task that awaits the Church in the 21st Century. "All Truth is God's Truth."

Medical Ministry and Services

Christian missions pioneered medical ministry where both the Colonial Government and Native Authorities had no adequate medical services and institutions for their subjects, especially in the remote rural areas. They built health clinics, dispensaries, maternity homes and hospitals. They also pioneered Leprosy ministry and services and as well as built eye clinics and hospitals. Just as in the field of education, the Colonial Government and Native Authorities needed the help of Christian missions in this

area. Christian missions contributed immensely to the state of health, demography and social well being of the people in general.

Both medical and education activities were conceived by Christian missions as auxiliary or the hand-maid of the Gospel of Christ. They were simply tools and means for evangelisation and church planting. They were never viewed as an integral part of the Gospel. This led to the dichotomy between the "word" and the "deed", or the "spiritual" and the "social". This "dualism" affected the wholistic gospel approach to the total man and woman.

Just as in the area of education, the State took over the medical work and services from the missions and churches. This reflects the belief that the Church should limit its activities to only what is "spiritual", but what touches on politics, economics, social, etc., should be the prerogative of the State. Both medical and education policies of Christian missions reflect this dualistic worldview.

The medical sector of the State is also falling apart, as it is in the education sector. If the Church is to serve and meet man's total needs in the 21st Century, it must go beyond this dualistic worldview and the missionary legacy.

Literature Ministry

Christian missions pioneered Christian literature ministry and translation in Nigeria. They reduced African languages into writing and grammar, printed, sold and distributed Christian and general literature through their translation work and bookshops. They also pioneered Christian journalism and developed social critics and greatly influenced nationalist's movements.

The preoccupation of Christian missions with what is "sacred" as opposed to what is "secular" led to their ambivalent approach to social, cultural, political and economic causes. These were conceived to be out of bounds. Missionary products who wanted to get involved in these issues, must have to do so outside of the Church. The contributions of missions to these areas were mainly indirect in nature or consequential to mission policies towards these areas.

The bulk of Christian literature pertained mainly to spiritual needs, but hardly on how the Church, Christianity, the Christian

and the Bible addressed such issues. Serious biblical and theological reflections on these were inadequate. A Christian worldview of culture, religion, politics, economics, ethnicity or race, etc. needs to be fully developed by the Church.

General Social Formations and Transformations

Christian missions have done more in bringing about social, religious and human development and change than any other human agent. Missionary activities in general were indeed powerful tools for religious and social change, human development and social formations and transformations. Social and human services to the missionaries were first and foremost auxiliary to the Gospel of Christ. They were a means to the gospel. They were not ends in themselves. In spite of any limitations or weaknesses on the part of Christian missions in their theory and practice of missions, as pioneers, they made substantial contributions to nation-state building in modernising African societies which can be summarised in the following missionary activities:

Educational Programmes and Institutions
Medical Work, Services and Institutions
Literature Work, Translation and Publications
Social, Spiritual, Religious and Human Development.

In the Muslim Emirates of the Far North, Christian missions were kept out until the early 1930's when the British lifted the embargo but even with this, mission work was highly regulated and controlled by the Colonial Administration. This fact has great significance to State-Church relations in modern Nigeria.

The theory and practice of Christian missions informed and influenced their missionary activities and projects. Christian missions had clear goals and objectives which made them pioneers and social reformers. This missionary legacy, the pioneering and reforming spirit of the missionary, is what is lacking in the agenda of the Church today. What pioneering and reforming agenda does the Church have for society and the times? If the Church will become relevant in the 21st Century, these two principles must be addressed prophetically.

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