
A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ajet-02.php

Volume 34.2 2015

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

ISSN 1026-2946

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

Subscription Services: Email: ajetjournal@scott.ac.ke.

Subscription Information: Subscription rates and ordering procedures are published on the inside back cover. Information can be downloaded from our website: www.scott.ac.ke. Or email: ajetjournal@scott.ac.ke

Purpose: *AJET* is published twice a year by Scott Christian University, a chartered private university in Kenya, in order to provide theological educators and students with evangelical articles and book reviews related to Christian ministry in Africa.

Publisher: Scott Christian University, the publisher of *AJET*, has been accredited by ACTEA since 1979 and was chartered as a private university by the Commission for University Education (CUE) Kenya in November 1997. Scott Christian University now has three schools operating under its umbrella: the School of Theology (formerly Scott Theological College), the School of Education and the School of Professional Studies.

AJET is indexed in *Christian Periodical Index*; *New Testament Abstracts* (Cambridge MA); *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago; *Theology in Context* (Institute of Missiology, Germany); and in *DIALOG Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). *AJET* is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Website: http://www.atla.com/.

***AJET* is now on-line at:** http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ajet-03.php

Tracking the Maze of Theological Education in Sierra Leone: An Evangelical Perspective

by Joseph Bosco Bangura

Abstract

This article examines the context of theological education in Sierra Leone in order to analyze the historical stages (the missionary era, the national independence era, the conflict and post-conflict era) through which theological education has developed over the years. Having set the historical stage, the paper will then consider the nature of theological education in Sierra Leone (university, denominational, and charismatic models of theological education) and the emerging concerns that should affect the delivery of that theological education (the emergence of Charismatic Christianity, the need for community development and social transformation, and the need for contextual theology and cultural relevance). The article ends by identifying the most important questions raised by theological education that require an Evangelical response in Sierra Leone. These discussions take an Evangelical perspective as their point of departure.

Introduction

It is now common knowledge that the most buoyant hotspots of Christianity are firmly anchored in the non-western world,[1] where the faith is blossoming among the young, highly educated, and urban élite members of the population. Recent studies indicate that the Charismatic Movement that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s is gradually becoming the most inviting face of the Christian faith in Africa.[2] Sierra Leone has seen a reinvention of Christianity with the founding and development of independent churches, ministries and networks that clearly espouse Charismatic spirituality. However, the pace of growth seen

[1] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* Revised, Expanded Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1; John Parratt ed., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Glasgow: Regnum Africa, 2000), 3; Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (New York/Edinburgh: Orbis Books/T&T Clark, 1996), 9.

[2] Kwabena J. Darkwa Amano, "Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana and the African Culture: Confrontation or Compromise?" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2009), 125; J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Hearing in our own tongues the wonderful works of God: Pentecost, Ecumenism and Renewal in African Christianity" *Missionalia* 35:3 (2007), 128.

in the Christian faith far outweighs the available theological training institutions that prepare the leaders who will eventually preside over the affairs of these churches. This scenario suggests that there exists a kind of theological anaemia that does not augur well for theological education in Sierra Leone. Thus, a tracking of the maze in which theological education has evolved is a necessary step in attempting to cure this disquieting anaemia.

Byang Kato, alarmed at the impending and pervasive danger that would befall a church that tries to exist without theology, predicted in the mid 1970s that if theological education is not put at the centre of the growing pace of Christianity in Africa, a kind of "Christo-paganism" was bound to develop. And that when it did, there would be an increased ignorance of the most basic Bible doctrines that churches are expected to possess. Kato believed this reality would be far more destructive to the health of the African church as it would accentuate a return to paganism.[3] More recently, James Nkansah-Obrempong, having presented what he sees as the contemporary theological situation in Africa, notes that one of the main difficulties beseting African Evangelical theologians is their failure to use appropriately African categories in their theological reflection.[4] These voices issue a stern warning that should guide the development of theological education that is beneficial to the church in Africa.

The situation described above not only reflects the Africa of Kato's day, but also, unfortunately, reflects the perception that many hold about

---

[3] Byang Kato, "Africa's Battle for Biblical Christianity," *Moody Monthly* (November 1974), 53-56.

[4] James Nkansah-Obrempong, 'The Contemporary Theological Situation in Africa: An Overview,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31:2 (2007), 148. There is often considerable acrimony about the precise meaning of the term Evangelical or Evangelicalism. Because of this, it is proper that I propose a working definition that governs my use of this term in this article. This paper follows the meaning of the term Evangelical as understood in Sierra Leone, where it would refer to those churches that were founded by Protestant missionary denominations. These churches hold to beliefs such as: (a) the entire trustworthiness of Holy Scripture; (b) the centrality and finality of Christ in salvation; (c) the total sinfulness of humanity and their need for salvation through Christ's atoning death as well as the need for holy living through the power of the Holy Spirit; and (d) evangelism. This understanding may exclude a number of churches in Sierra Leone from what counts as being Evangelical. Cf. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-14; Iain Taylor ed., *Not Evangelical Enough! The Gospel at the Centre* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 2-3; Tom Greggs ed., *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging with God, Scripture and the World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), 5-6; Mark A. Knoll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitfield and The Wesleys* (Leicester: IVP, 2004), 11-18.

the current state of theological education in Sierra Leone. It is known in the academy in Sierra Leone that Harry Sawyerr and Edward Fashole-Luke, both of whom taught theology at Fourah Bay College from the 1960s to the 1980s, agree with Kato's reckoning that theological reflection should emerge from and be solidly based on a carefully developed exegesis of the Bible.[5] This premise lays an appropriate background upon which theological education must seek to interface with the crucial issues that underpin Sierra Leone's African cultures. However, the integration of such themes from Sierra Leone's African cultures must be seen only as an entry point for theological education that is poised to benefit the church.

The Historical Context of Theological Education

The Missionary Era

In the history of missions, theological education is often perceived as a useful tool that helps the church grow in the new territories where missionaries have carried the gospel. This is exactly what transpired in Sierra Leone during the colonial and missionary era. Sierra Leone's contact with Christianity and the role this former British colony played in the early diffusion of Christianity across West Africa are well documented.[6] Considered the first Protestant mission field in tropical Africa,[7] the Province of Freedom became a bastion for the resettlement of freed slaves when it was founded in 1791.[8] Freetown became a major hub for missionary, educational and economic activity across British controlled West Africa. Members of the Clapham Sect[9] who established the Sierra

---

[5] See Harry Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa* (London: Lutterworth, 1968), 33; and Edward Fashole-Luke, 'The Quest For African Christian Theology,' *Journal of Religious Thought* 32:2 (1975), 77.

[6] See among others, Jehu Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission: African Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context* (Westport/London: Praeger, 2002); Gilbert W. Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone: A Study of Church Growth in Africa's Oldest Protestant Mission Field* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969)*;* Leslie E.T. Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity in an African Province of Freedom A Case Study of European Influence and Culture in Church Development,* (Freetown: Print Sundries and Stationers, 2008); Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst, 1983); Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[7] Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone,* 15.

[8] Sanneh, *Abolitionist Abroad*, 41.

[9] The Clapham Sect comprised a group of Evangelicals who worked for a variety of religious and philanthropic projects, including 'the desire to convert the heathens, promoting civilization and Christianity in Africa.' The most prominent members of this group included John Venn (son of Henry Venn), William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Charles Grant, James Stephen, Zachary Macauley, Lord Teighmouth and Granville Sharp. See Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work* Vol. 1.

Leone Company, envisaged the Province of Freedom to be a Christian experiment where freed slaves would be encouraged to productively use the land and eventually seek self-determination.[10] It was to Freetown that four groups of Africans, the black poor, Nova Scotians, Maroons, and Re-captives, were resettled, trained and eventually dispersed to work in other parts of West Africa.[11] The Re-captives, who later became the Krio people of Sierra Leone, went on to become the single most important factor to profoundly impact early African Christianity and missions in West Africa.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS),[12] which was at the forefront of the missionary expedition in Sierra Leone, founded Fourah Bay College[13] in 1827 as an institute for the training of pastors, catechists, missionaries and schoolmasters. The establishment of this institution offered the Re-captives the opportunity to excel in education, thus leading to their integration in the British colonial administration as civil servants. The most well-known example of the Re-captives' excellence in education and Christianity was Samuel Adjai Crowther who led a pioneering missionary enterprise in Nigeria where he served as the first black bishop in the CMS Niger mission.[14] Through the training provided at Fourah Bay College, the

---

(London: CMS, 1899), 41-42; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present* Volume II, Revised Edition. (London: Harper & Row, 1975), 1031; and Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity …*, 11-12.

[10] Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity …*, 11; Sanneh, *Abolitionist Abroad*, 41.

[11] Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 41-42; Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, 67; Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 86; 103-104; Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 71; Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission*, 7.

[12] The Church Missionary Society (CMS) was founded on Friday 12 April 1799 as the Society for Missions to Africa and the East by sixteen Evangelical clergymen and nine laymen in the upper room of the Castle and Falcon Inn, Aldergste Street in London. The express purpose of the CMS was "that it is a duty highly incumbent upon every Christian to endeavour to propagate the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen." In 1813, it adopted the name CMS. See, Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society*, 69; Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission*, 13; Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 1033. For a comprehensive history of the CMS see, Jocelyn Murray, *Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985); Kevin Ward, 'Taking Stock: The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians,' in Kevin Ward and Brain Stanley eds., *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000).

[13] Fourah Bay College was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1827. By the 1870s, Fourah Bay College was fully affiliated to Durham University in England, and started to award degrees in the arts and theology. See Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 103; Gordon Hewitt, *The Problem of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1940* Vol. 1. (London: SCM Press, 1971), 19-22.

[14] Hanciles, *Euthanasia of a Mission*, 7; Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 104-105; and Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 75-76. For a

Re-captives returned to their home countries with a "new burden of Christian responsibility to the rest of the continent."[15]

This pattern of missionary theological education continued with the coming of other missionary agencies such as the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (1800), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society from London (1811), the US based United Brethren in Christ (1855), the Roman Catholic Church (1859), the American Wesleyan Mission (1889), the Seventh Day Adventist Missionary Society (1907) and the Assemblies of God Mission (1950),[16] among others. Member churches behind some of these missionary agencies cooperated with each other in carrying out their task of evangelism and later founded the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) in 1924 and the Evangelical Fellowship of Sierra Leone (EFSL) in 1959.[17] The CCSL promoted the ecumenical activities of the World Council of Churches, while the EFSL chose to associate itself with churches who see themselves as Evangelicals in Sierra Leone. The EFSL went on to become the first national Evangelical fellowship in Africa to obtain membership from the World Evangelical Alliance.

One key consequence of this early missionary collaboration was the founding of The Evangelical College of Theology in 1964 as the primary institution to deliver theological education that strengthens Evangelical churches in Sierra Leone.[18] The missions supplied the teaching faculty,

---

biography of Bishop Crowther, see Jesse Page, *The Black Bishop: Samuel Adjai Crowther* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908); Jeanne Decorvet and Emmanuel Oladipo, *Samuel Adjayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace* (Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 2006).

[15] Sanneh, *West African Christianity*, 73.

[16] Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity …*, 75-81, 145; Olson, *Church Growth in Sierra Leone*, 95, 135, 186-188; Prince Sorie Conteh, *Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians in Africa: Interreligious Encounters and Dialogue*, (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 95.

[17] Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity …*, 339; Christina Maria Breman, *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organization, Members, Projects, External Relations and Message*, (Zoetermeer: Uitgevereij Boekencentrum, 1996), 194.

[18] *The Evangelical College of Theology* (TECT) was founded in 1964 by three Evangelical missionary denominations, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, the Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone and the Missionary Church of Africa. The Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone and Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion joined the founding denominations to become proprietors in 1979 and 1998 respectively. This college, whose original name was Sierra Leone Bible College, was re-named The Evangelical College of Theology in 2000 to allow it to reflect the diversified educational programmes that are offered at the college. The college offers diploma and bachelor's degree programmes in theology, community development studies, peace and conflict studies and secretarial studies. The

while students were drawn from mainline Evangelical churches who were members of EFSL. The belief shared by these agencies was and still is that the church can be properly incarnated through the training of the national believers in a basic understanding of the Bible, biblical languages, theology and the arts. The missionary agents consitututed the bulk of the teaching force at Fourah Bay College and The Evangelical College of Theology and they controlled the type of theological education provided. This education was tilted toward an understanding of the biblical text that uses the western categories in which Christian theology was formulated. Few attempts were taken to try to understand the traditional and religious African contexts in which the training was done.

The Era of National Independence

After Sierra Leone attained political independence from Britain in 1961, discussions in the political arena soon began to infiltrate the church scene. This pattern was similar to what was happening in much of Africa where the wave of political independence coalesced into a clamour for church autonomy. Churches began to discuss whether or not the inherited theological education that shaped ecclesiastical life under the colonial period was relevant for independent Africa.[19]

When the churches became nationalised, efforts were made to introduce courses that, it was thought, were better able to address important cultural issues with which African Christians were struggling. Theological training institutes became more open to the idea of teaching African Traditional Religion, African Theology, and Contextualization that were once seen as too liberal to be included in a curriculum for theological education. The idea was that, in order for theological reflection to be more useful in addressing the cultural context in which it was practised, the church should pay attention to the cultural situation of its African adherents.[20] This, they believed, was a missing element that had weakened theological education under the missionary era. The few national professors who taught theology at Fourah Bay College became more engaged in conducting research on critical cultural issues that they saw as having significant impact on ecclesiastical life for Sierra Leone's Christians.[21] Students of theology were also encouraged to undertake

college is accredited by Fourah Bay College, the Tertiary Education Commission in Sierra Leone, and the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa.

[19] See Esther Mombo, 'Theological Education in Africa,' in *Voices from Africa: Transforming Mission in a Context of Marginalization An Anthology*, Andrew C. Wheeler, ed. (London: Church House Publishing, 2002), 127.

[20] See Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism*, 13-32; Fashole-Luke, “The Quest for African Christian Theology,” 75.

[21] See for instance, Harry Sawyerr, "Graveside Libations in and Near Freetown," *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion* 7 (1965): 48-55.

theological research in issues that interfaced Christian theology with the cultural and traditional background of Sierra Leone.

It appears as if, under the era of national independence, it dawned upon the practitioners of theological education that the African traditional and religious worldview upon which Christianity was received had been ignored for too long. They decided therefore, that this background needed to be revisited for careful analysis if the continued relevance of the faith was to be assured.[22] However, this process moved theological education away from the biblical text and many of its western theological accretions. Thus, theological education became much more concerned with mediating religious, traditional and cultural relevance in the African context, and less about understanding the biblical text.

The Conflict and Post-conflict Era

Independent Sierra Leone soon realized that the political élite must do more if the entire population were to share in the gains of independence. However, after removing colonial oppression, Sierra Leone followed the path taken by other newly independent African states where interparty and intraparty conflicts over access to power dominated the political atmosphere.[23] The decision to introduce a one-party system of governance, the atmosphere of corruption that allowed government functionaries and politicians to freely embezzle state funds without any accountability, the discovery of diamonds, and meddling by powerful external agents led to the outbreak of a horrendous rebel war in 1991.[24] By the time the war ended in 2002, tens of thousands of people were killed and many more had their limbs gruesomely amputated. Women and girls were subjected to gang rape by the rebel forces. Property damage was extensive and many people became either internally displaced persons or refugees outside Sierra Leone. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court for Sierra Leone were set up to investigate what went wrong, seek reconciliation, and try those who bore the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and human rights violations committed during the rebel conflict.[25]

---

[22] Cf Yusufu Turaki, "Africa Christianity in Global Religious and Cultural Conflict," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31:2 (2007), 138.

[23] See April Gordon and Donald Gordon, eds. *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, Fourth Edition, (Boulder/London: Lynne Reinner, 2007), 70.

[24] Joe A. D. Alie, "Background to the Conflict (1961-1991): What Went Wrong and Why?" in *Bound To Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone*, Anatole Ayssi and Robin-Edward Poulton, eds. (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2000), 34; Lisa Denney, "Explaining War, Creating Peace: UK Sponsored Reforms in Sierra Leone," *Contemporary Review* (Summer 2009), 155.

[25] See Richard Bennett, *Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone*, (Freetown: UNAMSIL, 2001); Tom Perrillo and Marieke Wierda, *The Special Court for Sierra*

The impact of the war on the churches meant that they had to adopt measures that would restore civility in the political arena and address the social issues that prompted the war in the first place. Churches distributed relief supplies such as food and non-food items, and organized trauma healing and counselling sessions for war victims. Churches became temporary living centres for refugees and internally displaced persons. Given the nature of crimes committed and the trauma suffered by people, many Christians interpreted the war as having been caused by demonic forces whose aim was to destroy Sierra Leone.[26] To ameliorate this terrible situation, national sessions of prayer for repentance were organized by the churches throughout Sierra Leone.

Theological education needed to respond to this new social order in Sierra Leone. The existing curricula of theological institutions were extensively revised to allow the introduction of new non-theological degree programmes. The new programmes were envisaged to address community development, poverty, women and gender issues, conflict, peace and human rights, among others. For instance, The Evangelical College of Theology introduced two new degree programmes, Bachelor of Arts in Community Development Studies and Bachelor of Arts in Peace & Conflict Studies. After their introduction these academic programmes quickly received accreditation from Fourah Bay College. Using a distinctly Christian-based curriculum, the degree programmes offer courses that address social issues and provide a Christian solution to the social disintegration created by the war. This conflict and post-conflict era required theological education to emphasize the relevance of Christian theology for good governance, peace building, human rights, reconciliation, community development and social justice.

The Nature of Theological Education

The University Model of Theological Education

Sierra Leone has a long history of involvement in the delivery of theological education in the West African sub-region. The pastoral training offered to freed black slaves in Freetown contributed to the early spread of Christianity across West Africa. Today Fourah Bay College (FBC), The Evangelical College of Theology (TECT) and Sierra Leone Theological College (SLTC)[27] offer programmes of study under the university model of

---

Leone Under Scrutiny, (New York: International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2006).

[26] See Irene John, "Charismatics and Community," in *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, John Parratt, ed., (London: SPCK, 1997), 131.

[27] The Sierra Leone Theological College (SLTC) was founded in 1975 by three church denominations that had membership with the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone. These denominations are: the Anglican Diocese of Freetown and Bo, the Methodist Church in Sierra Leone and the United Methodist Church Sierra Leone

theological education. These colleges provide theological and non-theological education mainly at the baccalaureate level. FBC, which is part of the University of Sierra Leone and the Tertiary Education Commission, provides accreditation to TECT and SLTC. Graduates from TECT and SLTC often proceed to FBC for further studies at the graduate and postgraduate levels in theology and related fields.

There are many benefits that can be identified in the university model of theological education. First, the colleges in this model try to maintain very high academic standards in the process of admitting, training and graduating students. Second, these colleges have national and international accreditation that renders their programmes of study competitive. Third, graduates from these colleges have access to and gain easy admission at institutions of further and higher education in Sierra Leone and overseas. And finally, graduates from colleges that follow the university model of theological education enter diversified professional careers upon the completion of their studies. This makes these colleges the port of first call for those seeking advanced level theological education.

Although advantages such as these exist, Evangelical voices have begun to see areas that tend to weaken the efficacy of the theological education offered by these colleges. First, colleges associated with the university model of theological education have a tendency to pay less emphasis on the practical relevance of their training to the needs of church life and pastoral ministry. Second, they are seen as promoting a pluralistic understanding of theology and religious studies that call into question the need for evangelism. Third, given that graduates have received training that makes them highly qualified professionals, it is often difficult to retain them for service in pastoral ministry. Fourth, given the mass migration of graduates into professions other than pastoral ministry, the church is deprived of its most highly trained theologians.

The Denominational Model of Theological Education

As church denominations became more organized in their governance structures and ecclesiastical networks, the idea to form centres for theological training that are owned and managed by individual denominations was conceived as a viable alternative to the perceived problems in the existing theological colleges following the university model. Two of the most prominent Evangelical denominations that had collaborated to found colleges that follow the university model bought into this idea. The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone established the Wesleyan Christian College at Gbendembu, in northern Sierra Leone, with the aim of

---

Conference. The college offers diploma and bachelor's degree programmes in theology, community development studies, peace and conflict studies and secretarial studies. The college is accredited by Fourah Bay College and the Tertiary Education Commission in Sierra Leone.

training men and women as champions of Christ who would serve in pastoral ministry in Sierra Leone and beyond. The Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone also established the Baptist Bible Institute at Lunsar, in northern Sierra Leone to train its pastors and evangelists. Between them, they offer two theological programmes, Certificate in Theology and Diploma in Theology. Persons who desire to serve in the pastoral ministry in these denominations must first go through the training offered by these denominational training schools before they are accepted as pastors.

The denominations that have established centres where internal pastoral theological training is carried out argue that these institutes promise certain benefits. They see these training centres as less expensive to operate as they simply use the existing infrastructure that the churches already have for its theological training programmes. Further, they believe that these training centres accord students unhindered opportunity to study in-depth their denominational doctrines so that their pastors are thoroughly equipped in understanding the beliefs that underpin their faith convictions. Finally, these denominations believe they can more often retain graduates in the pastoral ministry.

Nevertheless, the denominational model of theological education is not without its limitations. For instance, given that these institutes are cheaper to run, the model is criticised for providing students with limited access to teaching and learning materials. There are also inadequate facilities for the delivery of proper theological training programmes. Moreover, because these institutes cater only for students from its own denominations, their programmes appear to pay less attention to the academic study of theology or dialogue with other theological persuasions that could enrich their graduates' pastoral ministry.

The Charismatic Model of Theological Education

New developments that took place in 1990s transformed the approach of churches to Bible training. These developments prompted a turning point that affected the delivery of theological education in Sierra Leone. The founding of Freetown Bible Training Centre (FBTC) by American Charismatic evangelist and Bible teacher, Russ Tatro, who had relocated to Sierra Leone from neighbouring Liberia, was pivotal in the shift taking place in theological education. Tatro's zeal for evangelism prompted the founding of a non-residential Bible school where students were offered rapid discipleship training and deployed to plant "Charismatic Bible-believing churches." The spread of this Charismatic model of theological education hinged on the suspicion in Charismatic circles that academic level theological education was unsuited to sustaining the revival that was

sweeping across the church scene.[28] In this model, practitioners argue that what is needed for participation in programmes of Bible training is conversion, a sense of call into pastoral ministry, and evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.[29] FBTC's curriculum starts with a two-year non-residential diploma in ministerial training that meets on Saturdays. This is followed by a one-year of advanced study and leads to an advanced diploma in ministerial training for those who have the backing of their churches to enter the pastoral ministry.[30] The informal nature of training delivered over the years, coupled with the colourful graduation ceremonies organized by FBTC, has seen an increase in the popularity of this sort of Bible training among churches.[31]

The Charismatic model is proud of the following advantages: firstly, this model does not require the completion of secondary school as a necessary condition for admission into its Bible training programmes. As noted already, the emphasis is on the conversion experience, a sense of call, and evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the applicant. Second, the training programme itself is less formal because it is modelled along the lines of discipleship. Classes are often interspersed with sessions of praise and worship, seminars and Bible teaching. Final examinations use a true and false mode of assessment and can be taken in written or oral format. Third, the whole training program is oriented toward Charismatic church and pastoral practice that draws freely from the African concepts of spiritual power, healing, demons and witchcraft. This makes for easy convergence with the spiritual impulses that Sierra Leone's Christians possess.

However, it is at this critical juncture that the Charismatic model of theological training is most criticized by other churches. First, this model is

---

[28] Allan Anderson and Matthews Ojo have both noted this paradigm of scepticism over the usefulness of academic level theological education among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in Africa. See Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 245; Matthews Ojo, *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*, (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2006), 191.

[29] See for instance Ojo, *The End Time Army*, 195; Henri Gooren, "Conversion Narratives," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, A. Anderson, M Bergunder, A. Droogers and C. Van der Laan, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 95-101; Abraham Akrong, "The Born Again Concept in the Charismatic Movement in Ghana," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35:1 (2011), 39.

[30] See Russ Tatro, *Establishing and Operating Interdenominational Bible Training Centres*, (Wilmington: Living Word Missions, 2014). Accessed 2015.04.17 at 7:58 PM. http://livingwordmissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Establishing-Operating-Interdenominational-Bible-Training-Centers.pdf

[31] See Shyllon, *Two Centuries of Christianity* …, 351.

criticised for being the main conduit that encouraged the spread of prosperity theologies across the church scene in Sierra Leone. Second, many see this form of training as anti-academic due to its primary emphasis on the anointing of the Holy Spirit in training for ministry. And finally, graduates from schools in the Charismatic model are often not given any academic recognition for the training they received. This means that when they seek admission at higher institutions for further studies, they are denied entrance. This happens both at denominational schools and at colleges using the university model.

The Concerns of Theological Education

The Emergence of Charismatic Christianity

The desire to see revival break out in the church scene ignited evangelistic initiatives among Evangelical churches in the 1970s and 80s. Member churches affiliated with EFSL supported the evangelistic work of New Life for All campaign, the Scripture Union of Sierra Leone, and the Sierra Leone Fellowship of Evangelical Students in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in Sierra Leone.[32] When these youth completed university, they found that their churches were slow in incorporating their newly acquired zeal for evangelistic revival that these organizations had hoped to achieve. This led some of them to establish small groups that met initially for Bible study and prayer. The small groups eventually became Charismatic churches when they began to meet on Sundays.[33] These new Charismatic churches later received a significant boost with the coming of FBTC in the 1990s.

The Charismatic form of expressing the Christian faith is very spontaneous and lively. This expression represents a conglomeration of various theological and pastoral practices that arouse the interests of worshipers. Such practices include, but are not limited to praise and worship, lively music teams patterned after contemporary western music bands, fasting and all night sessions of warfare prayers, prosperity summits, exorcism, prophecy, and Bible teaching conferences. These practices are designed to evoke the spiritual sensibilities of followers and draw attention to the concepts of spiritual power that are at work in Sierra Leone's cultures. These pastoral practices have not only gained popularity among Charismatic Christians, but have slowly begun to infiltrate and re-configure the pastoral ministry of non-Charismatic churches. This presents a new pastoral context for the exercise of church ministry in Evangelical churches who have been forced to introduce such practices in their weekly

[32] See Sylvanus Valcarcel, *A Brief Rendition of the Life and Ministry of Rev Dr Joseph Sedu Mans*, (Freetown: The Awakening Pioneers, 2006), 37-39.

[33] A similar pattern in the formation of Charismatic churches has been recorded in Malawi. See Klaus Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective," *Religion in Malawi* 9 (1999), 33-35.

meetings and Sunday worship services. The fact that Evangelical churches have shown this measured willingness to allow such practices is a pointer to theological education that the changing landscape in worship where spontaneity now characterizes liturgy needs to be critically examined and factored into a curriculum for the pastoral formation of church leaders.

Community Development and Social Transformation

Traditionally, denominations have used schools, hospitals and church buildings to engage the wider society. This action had a positive impact that resulted in the translation of the gospel into local languages, the development of the human capital that saw the new African élite taking over the government from the colonial authorities, and the introduction of better healthcare and curative alternatives to treating diseases. While this was done however, the ecclesial emphasis that had separated church and state meant that the churches had to maintain silence on issues that are seen as the root causes of years of corruption, bad governance and poverty that eventually resulted in the outbreak of the rebel conflict in the 1990s. That war impelled the churches to be more involved in the distribution of relief supplies, organizing trauma healing and counselling sessions, as well as accompanying the government and warring factions to negotiate peace and seek reconciliation. Theological education institutions supported the work of the churches by introducing new degree programmes that specialized in community development and social transformation courses. Although the usefulness of these courses is no longer in doubt, many voices are worried that theological education is in danger of losing its primary focus.

Contextual and Cultural Relevance

Sierra Leone's cultural context and the practices associated with it have not changed. The majority of the cultural, traditional and religious practices that help people derive meaning from the multifaceted experiences of life are still very much alive. Many people still hold secret society events where initiation ceremonies prepare young people to meaningfully participate in community life as adults.[34] Many others regularly observe ancestral rituals, and have a preference for polygamous marriages. Traditional beliefs in spirit possession and in diabolical activities perpetrated by witchcraft still dominate the spiritual landscape. However, the questions now put to this context, particularly by the young

[34] See for instance, James E. Davies, *The Church and the Secret Society Syndrome in Sierra Leone*, (Freetown: TECT, 2009); Richard Fanthrope, *Sierra Leone: The Influence of Secret Societies, with Special reference to Female Genital Mutilation*, (London: Writenet Independent Analysis Paper, 2007); Bianca Schimmel, *Female Genital Mutilation in Sierra Leone*, (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, 2007).

educated urban élite who have become the most faithful members of the churches, have significantly changed. Two examples of questions proffered by the urban élite suffice as illustration. First, in light of Exodus 20:12, Matthew 15:4, Mark 7:10 and Ephesians 6:2, what would be a biblically appropriate response to one's ancestors after conversion? Second, given the provisions of Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27, how can the church deal with persons who openly acknowledge their involvement in witchcraft and sorcery? These questions challenge various positions on culture once held by the churches and call for answers that explain the contextual nature and cultural relevance of the ministry of the churches. This means that theological education needs to create training programmes that address cultural and contextual issues raised by these questions in a biblically sound manner. Perhaps theological education needs to encourage students to progress beyond merely taking courses in African Traditional Religion to writing thesis dealing biblically with the issues of spiritual warfare and demonic possession, because these are increasingly becoming the pastoral issues that churches have to face. Academic studies that critically examine these practices can enhance the effectiveness of the ministry of the churches.

Conclusion

This survey of the trajectory of theological education points to certain currents that leave open a number of questions that merit discussion and reflection among practitioners involved in the delivery of theological education. Four of the most pressing questions are discussed below. First, are we seeing a gap developing between the biblical text and the content of theological education? Although it is agreed that theological education should be based upon a carefully constructed exegesis of the Bible, yet there appears to be less focus on the biblical text, and a greater focus on courses dealing with community development and social transformation.

Training programmes for pastoral formation require biblical truth and depth if they are to help build healthy churches. Therefore Sierra Leone's theological education programmes should return to a greater focus on the biblical text. The aim of this call is to prevent the churches in Sierra Leone from reverting to the era of Christo-paganism that Byang Kato vigorously fought against.

Second, what is the precise cultural relevance of the present theological education programmes on offer in Sierra Leone? We noted that the post-independence attempts to free theological education from its western accretions brought about a renewed awareness among practitioners that there must be a connection between theological education and cultural relevance. This need is further buttressed by the Charismatic pastoral practices that draw freely from concepts in Sierra Leone's traditions that deal specifically with the exercise of spiritual power.

This demands that theological education must convey a proper understanding of the place that spiritual power has for pastoral ministry and church growth.

Third, to what extent have the many contemporary social issues that Sierra Leone has endured impacted the content of theological education programmes? Sierra Leone's period of rebel insurrection brought to the fore discussions about the role that theological education should play in helping to (re-)shape the churches' agenda on poverty, lack of good governance, gender disparity and ecological issues, among others. While courses have been introduced that have enriched the theology curriculum or brought in new non-theology bachelor's degree programmes, the question that one might still ask is, are theology graduates effectively prepared to face the demands of pastoral ministry in a context where emerging social concerns threaten the people's daily life? Theological education programmes, particularly those offered at the masters level or higher, must ensure that theology students are adequately prepared to engage seriously with the wider society in a manner that reflects the nature of God's love in Christ Jesus. Such programmes of formation are believed to honour Christ, prepare theology students to assume leadership roles that benefit the church, and also serve the greater good of society.

Finally, isn't it time for the university, denominational and Charismatic models of theological education to collaborate in order to achieve their goals? If this were to occur, one could foresee that theological education would be better placed to benefit from the meagre resources available to the churches that support theological education. The churches are longing for theological education programmes that train the minds/hearts, hands/feet and eyes/feelings of pastors and church workers who should radiate the love of Christ in a rapidly changing context plagued by numerous problems. Theological education cannot afford to settle for rivalry and competition as it seeks to fulfil the mandate of training the next generation of church and societal leaders who will be passionate about their faith and share what they have learned with other competent leaders. Such a vision for biblically-based and contextually relevant ministry calls for dialogue that must begin in the academy where theological education is delivered.

Bibliography

Akrong, Abraham. "The Born Again Concept in the Charismatic Movement in Ghana." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35:1 (2011).

Alie, Joe A. D. "Background to the Conflict (1961-1991): What Went Wrong and Why?" in *Bound To Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone*. Anatole Ayssi and Robin-Edward Poulton, eds. Geneva: UNIDIR, 2000.

Amano, Kwabena J. Darkwa. “Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana and the African Culture: Confrontation or Compromise?” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2009).

Anderson, Allan. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004.

Asamoah-Gyadu, J. Kwabena. “Hearing in our own tongues the wonderful works of God: Pentecost, Ecumenism and Renewal in African Christianity” *Missionalia* 35:3 (2007).

Bediako, Kwame. *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*. Glasgow: Regnum Africa, 2000.

Bennett, Richard. *Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone*. Freetown: UNAMSIL, 2001.

Breman, Christina Maria. *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organization, Members, Projects, External Relations and Message*. Zoetermeer: Uitgevereij Boekencentrum, 1996.

Conteh, Prince Sorie, *Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians in Africa: Interreligious Encounters and Dialogue*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009.

Davies, James E. *The Church and the Secret Society Syndrome in Sierra Leone*. Freetown: TECT, 2009.

Decorvet, Jeanne, and Emmanuel Oladipo. *Samuel Adjayi Crowther: The Miracle of Grace*. Lagos: CSS Bookshops Ltd., 2006.

Denney, Lisa. “Explaining War, Creating Peace: UK Sponsored Reforms in Sierra Leone,” *Contemporary Review* (Summer 2009).

Fanthrope, Richard. *Sierra Leone: The Influence of Secret Societies, with Special reference to Female Genital Mutilation*. London: Writenet Independent Analysis Paper, 2007.

Fashole-Luke, Edward. “The Quest For African Christian Theology,” *Journal of Religious Thought* 32:2 (1975).

Fiedler, Klaus. “The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective.” *Religion in Malawi* 9 (1999).

Gooren, Henri. “Conversion Narratives,” in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*. A. Anderson, M Bergunder, A. Droogers and C. Van der Laan, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Gordon, April, and Donald Gordon, eds. *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, Fourth Edition. Boulder/London: Lynne Reinner, 2007.

Greggs, Tom, ed. *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging with God, Scripture and the World*. London/New York: Routledge, 2010.

Hanciles, Jehu. *Euthanasia of a Mission: African Church Autonomy in a Colonial Context*. Westport/London: Praeger, 2002.

Hewitt, Gordon. *The Problem of Success: A History of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1940* Vol. 1. London: SCM Press, 1971.

Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* Revised, Expanded Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

John, Irene. “Charismatics and Community,” *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. John Parratt, ed. London: SPCK, 1997.

Kato, Byang. “Africa's Battle for Biblical Christianity,” *Moody Monthly* (November 1974).

Knoll, Mark A. *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitfield and The Wesleys.* Leicester: IVP, 2004.

Larsen, Timothy and Daniel J. Treier eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott. *A History of Christianity: Reformation to the Present,* Volume II, Revised Edition. London: Harper & Row, 1975.

Mombo, Esther. “Theological Education in Africa,” in *Voices from Africa: Transforming Mission in a Context of Marginalization An Anthology*. Andrew C. Wheeler, ed. London: Church House Publishing, 2002.

Murray, Jocelyn. *Proclaim the Good News: A Short History of the Church Missionary Society*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985.

Nkansah-Obrempong, James. “The Contemporary Theological Situation in Africa: An Overview,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31:2 (2007).

Ojo, Matthews. *The End-Time Army: Charismatic Movements in Modern Nigeria*. Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2006.

Olson, Gilbert W. *Church Growth in Sierra Leone: A Study of Church Growth in Africa’s Oldest Protestant Mission Field*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.

Page, Jesse. *The Black Bishop: Samuel Adjai Crowther*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908.

Parratt, John ed. *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Perrillo, Tom and Marieke Wierda. *The Special Court for Sierra Leone Under Scrutiny*. New York: International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2006.

Sanneh, Lamin. *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. London: C. Hurst, 1983.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Sawyerr, Harry. "Graveside Libations in and Near Freetown," *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion* 7, (1965).

Sawyerr, Harry. *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa.* London: Lutterworth, 1968.

Schimmel, Bianca. *Female Genital Mutilation in Sierra Leone*. Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, 2007.

Shyllon, Leslie E.T. *Two Centuries of Christianity in an African Province of Freedom A Case Study of European Influence and Culture in Church Development.* Freetown: Print Sundries and Stationers, 2008.

Stock, Eugene. *The History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work,* Vol. 1. London: CMS, 1899.

Tatro, Russ. *Establishing and Operating Interdenominational Bible Training Centres*. Wilmington: Living Word Missions. http://livingwordmissions.org/wp-

content/uploads/2014/10/Establishing-Operating-Interdenominational-Bible-Training-Centers.pdf Accessed 2015.04.17 7:58 PM

Taylor, Iain, ed. *Not Evangelical Enough! The Gospel at the Centre*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003.

Turaki, Yusufu. "Africa Christianity in Global Religious and Cultural Conflict," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31:2 (2007).

Valcarcel, Sylvanus. *A Brief Rendition of the Life and Ministry of Rev Dr Joseph Sedu Mans*. Freetown: The Awakening Pioneers, 2006.

Ward, Kevin. "Taking Stock: The Church Missionary Society and Its Historians," in Kevin Ward and Brain Stanley eds. *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999.* Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2000.

Walls, Andrew F. *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. New York/Edinburgh: Orbis Books/T&T Clark, 1996.