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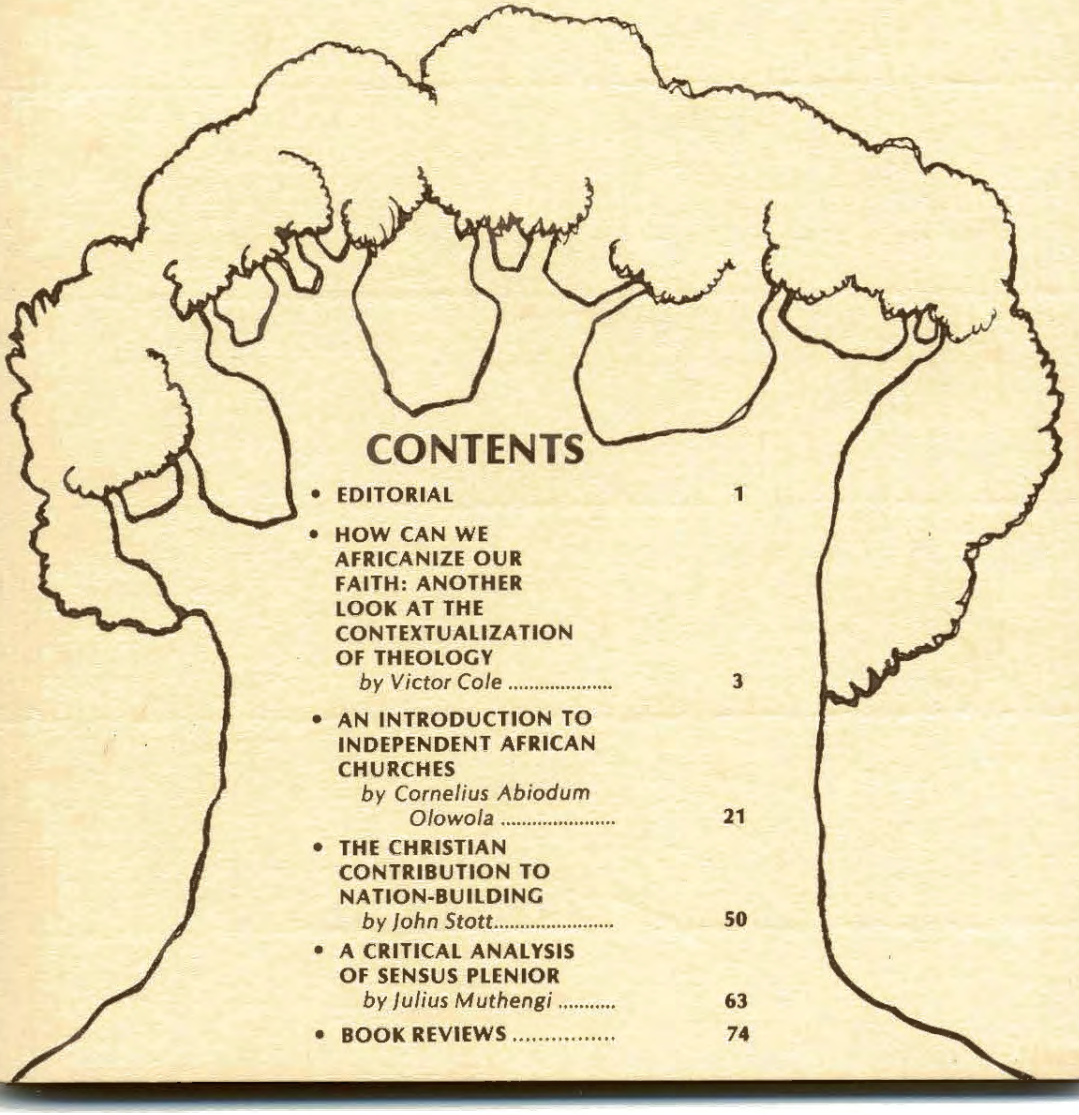

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THE EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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Cover:

The Baobab tree is the EAJET symbol for the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the baobab tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

EDITORIAL

A label bearing the words "made in Africa" is a symbol of pride for the people of Africa. It says "we are free"; "we are creative"; "we are self sufficient"; "we can make our contribution in the world."

We can look with pride on the developing "made-in-Africa church." Increasingly the church in Africa is taking on its own distinctive style and emphases which add to the fullness and richness of the body of Christ. Yet "made in Africa" does not guarantee the quality of the product. Failure to meet the standard may be true of the African product as well as the European, Asian or American.

Biblical revelation is not a "given" in any culture. It stands over each expression of a culture. In our articles in this issue our contributors try to guide our thinking about the church in Africa.

Victor Cole writes on the continuing challenge of contextualizing Christianity in Africa. Cornelius Abiodun Olowola evaluates independent churches considered by some to be a model for contextualizing. John Stott deals with the role of the African church in nation building. Julius Muthengi deals with the important hermeneutical question of *Sensus Plenior*: Does the Scripture have a fuller sense than that intended by the human authors? This question has a place in the contextualization debate.

Several important books are highlighted and evaluated in our review section. We wish you profitable reading.

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HOW CAN WE AFRICANIZE OUR FAITH: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THEOLOGY

Victor Cole

The term "contextualization" was born in the early 70's within the framework of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Theological Education Fund. The coining of the term has been attributed to Sholei Coe and Sharon Sapseziah.[1] However, in over a decade of debate no clear consensus has emerged as to the meaning, the bases and the process involved in contextualization. The attempt here is to offer a perspective to the on-going discussion in the attempt to contextualize theology.

Meaning

The WCC's third mandate points out that contextualization should not be confused with indigenization. The mandate states "Contextualization has to do with how we can assess the peculiarity of third world contexts. . . Contextualization . . . takes into account the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice, which characterize the historical movement of nations in the Third World."[2] This definition includes many who are currently attempting to contextualize theology. I myself do not see a distinction between indigenization and contextualization. For that reason, many attempts at indigenization that will be presented in this paper are regarded as attempts to contextualize.[3]

When one looks at the western evangelical circles, contextualization is often described as a Third-World Theology. At the same time, contextualization is often limited to its kerygmatic dimension. Some others see it as merely a cross-cultural endeavour. This last view re-closes the paternalistic charges that have been brought against past indigenization attempts.

My definition of contextualization includes several theological disciplines. I define contextualization as:

> a theological formulation from exegesis of biblical texts within a socio-cultural context, and a living out of that theology within the given cultural context, utilizing the Bible as the only authority while recognizing the progress of biblical revelation.[4]

In this definition both the kerygmatic and the didactic responsibilities of the church are included. In short, the whole counsel of God is involved. It will be noticed that in this description, faith and practice are not divorced; hence theological formulation is coupled with a living out of theology. Another point worthy of note in this description is the recognition of authority, namely, biblical authority. The next point worthy of note is the implicit catholicity. The phrase, "a given cultural context," cuts across east or west, north or south. I see contextualization as a task that all churches around the world must engage in for themselves as they allow the Bible to speak to their particular contemporary issues. The message of the Bible is a constant; our particular situations are variables. Our theologies must not become inscripturated as though they have been "once for all delivered to the saints." One of the wonders of the Bible is that the diligent and humble learner continues to take out of its treasures "both old and new." This implicit catholicity then calls for local and ethnic efforts in contextualization rather than a service to be performed by one group for another.

Bases

The continuing lack of consensus on the topic is further revealed in the diversities of bases for contextualization that have been advocated. The particular presuppositions inherent in the meaning one attributes to the term underly one's bases for contextualization. In the WCC's third mandate, *Missio Dei* was regarded as a key basis for contextualization. As Sholei Coe describes it, *Missio Dei* is the mission to which the church is called to participate. This mission, according to Coe, is world-directed and it is God at work in the socio-political scene in history, in a revolutionary way. For Coe it is this concept of mission that justifies: contextuality (the critical assessment of the context); contextualization (as described in the WCC mandate) and decontextualization (the process by which contextualization takes place). Coe writes, "Authentic contextualization must be open constantly to the painful process of decontextualization, for the sake of recontextualization."[5] The dialectical implication in Coe's statement is apparent. This dialectical basis is revealed in many of the approaches to contextualization that are found especially in Latin America and to a lesser extent in Asia, Southern Africa and in North American 'Black Theology'.

Other bases for contextualization have been presented. For example, Harvie Conn saw the need for a new hermeneutic as a basis for contextualization. He says that the method of interpreting the Bible thus far has put some cultural blinders on the western Christian, thereby creating an ethnocentric approach to the Bible. He writes:

> Exegesis was carried on in basically a western-oriented, monocultural mindset, a "Constantinian cultural captivity." Context then and now in exegesis was defined narrowly in terms of the language of the text . . . . Forgetting the unique insight into exegetical method provided by Calvin, the evangelical tradition

> began to build on the western Cartesian distinction between truth and its practice, abstract theoretical cognition and concrete application. Therefore, in exegesis and in communicating the results of exegesis a narrow view of hermeneutic has been developed that reduces theology to the ideational and application to the practical. In seminaries it functions by department compartmentalization, exegesis being defined as the relatively detached judgement on the text by Old Testament or New Testament departments, a study of the text's "application" reserved for the practical theology department.[6]

Others, including this writer,[7] have presented some biblical bases for contextualization. The spread of the church from the Jewish to the Hellenistic cultures presents us with biblical precedents for contextualization. Many students of the Bible have observed that the church took on Hellenistic characteristics as it moved from Judea to the Gentile territories. These characteristics included the liturgical and the doctrinal.

In their liturgy, the Hellenists transcribed the Christian message into the Greek context. For instance, they formulated theology with hymns. Philippians 2:6-11 has been recognized by Bible students as bearing Hellenized vocabulary. In this short hymn, christology was briefly taught. It was not accidental that the great apostle to the Gentiles was steeped in Hellenistic culture and he was "all things to all men" in his attempt to win some for Christ. 1 Timothy 3:16 is another hymn that sets forth apostolic doctrine among the Hellenists. In short, the Hellenistic church seemed not to know of hymnology apart from theology.

On the doctrinal side (although the early church did not separate doctrine from liturgy and practical life), we know that there were bodies of doctrines that were passed on from hand to hand. Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 when he speaks of passing on what

he had received. The content of that body of doctrines was kerygmatic. However, the Hellenistic colouring given to the doctrines is evident. For examples, the adoption of the Greek *Kyrios* for the Hebrew *Yahweh*; the introduction in Pauline writings of the Greek concept of bond-slave/master to explain the Christian's relationship to Christ; the adoption of the Greek *logos* to refer to Christ as the eternal *logos* - a clear borrowing from Greek culture; and the many illustrations given by Paul from the Hellenistic and Roman cultures in the setting forth of doctrines. Examples include Christ's triumphal nailing of our sins to the cross and making a public show of principalities and powers and the doctrine of the Christian life as set forth in the "Christian panoply" that is reminiscent of Roman gladiators (Ephesians 6).

All the biblical examples set forth here matched doctrine with practice. Theology was formulated and taught in real life situations. Usually it is not so much that Paul presents doctrines and then concludes with application. A careful examination shows applications sprinkled within heavily doctrinal portions and doctrines sprinkled all over the heavily applicational portions.

If churches all over the world are attempting to contextualize in every generation for their particular cultural contexts, one will begin to see hitherto nonsalient but highly relevant issues emphasized in theological education - whether in Sunday schools or in seminaries. For example, Christian liberty will not be taught to the exclusion of God's answer to political and economic repression; the Christian's riches in Christ will not be taught to the exclusion of God's viewpoint on materialism; the churches will formulate divine responses to both polygamy and serial marriages and not ignore these matters because they are too sensitive; churches will begin to allow the Bible to deal with both the spirit world as manifested in contemporary scenes and naturalism as represented in our

contemporary mechanistic world views.

How then may one approach the task of contextualization? Before presenting a perspective on the process of contextualization, a summary of some trends in contextualization is in order.

Trends

Attempts at contextualization can be found in one form or another in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. I describe many of these attempts as *Theologies of contextualization* because they are attempts to systematize *local theologies* whose authority base is human culture.

The African Scene. From the African scene the theologies that have been presented include "Political Theology," "Theology of Dialogue" and "Missiological Theology." These theologies have been summarized by John Mbiti.[8]

Political theology involves both theology of development and nation building and theology of liberation. The former concerns itself with the Christian's responsibility in an emerging nation. Topics of interest include church and society, the church and political life, and economic and social change. The latter concerns the church's response to political oppression as represented in Southern Africa.

Theology of Dialogue is, however, mostly emphasized in Sub-Saharan Africa. The emphasis is on religious and cultural points of contact between biblical and African backgrounds. This theology tries to elevate African Traditional Religions to the same level as Christianity and Islam.

Missiological theology is concerned with the attempt to bring the expansion of the church under the sole responsibility of African Christians. "Missions" is described in terms that transcend evangelization. The

extended meaning covers all that is implied in the WCC's concept of *Missio Dei* described above. It is within the context of this missiological theology that one hears of the moratorium call. As mission is redefined so is the concept of the church.

The Asian Scene. Asia has had its share of theologies of contextualization as represented in what has been described as syncretistic, accommodational and situational theologies.

Both syncretistic and accommodational theologies are attempts to synthesise Christianity with national religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. These theologies are similar in intent to the theologies of dialogue found on the African continent. An example of syncretism with Buddhism is found in Father Klaus Klostermaier's work.[9] Accommodational theology is represented in Kosuke Koyama's "Waterbuffalo Theology" in which he says,

> Every religion has good things as well as bad things; therefore, we must keep good things of Buddhism in Thailand and talk about them. This will change our lifestyle and I consider this as evangelism.[10]

Kasoh Kitamori represents in his work what is described as situational theology. Kitamori is a Japanese theologian who tried to explain Japan's World War II conditions of devastation and suffering in light of what he called God's pain. For Kitamori, pain is the link between God and man.[11]

The Americas. From the Americas the two theologies of contextualization that stand out are: "Black Theology" and "Liberation Theology."

Black Theology was developed in the U.S.A. in response to the socio-political and cultural problems of a society that is colour-conscious. In their response, Black American theologians formulated a theology that

sees blackness in everything: Black God, Black church, Black liberation, Black power, etc.

From Latin America was born Liberation Theology in response to centuries of socio-economic and political oppression. The ground works were laid by reactionary elements of the church and society movement, (ISAL in Spanish initials) and some elements of the Roman Catholic Church. It was Rubem Alves' dissertation from Princeton entitled, **A Theology of Human Hope** that offered the first intellectually-documented response to the situation. However, the systematic theologian of the theology is the Peruvian Jesuit, Gustavo Gutierrez.[12] Liberation theology attempts to utilize socialism inspired by Marxist philosophy to overturn the economic and social oppression imposed by both feudalism and capitalism. The God of the Exodus is seen as the God of history and of political liberation. That Exodus experience is regarded as vital and having contemporary relevance to liberation theology.

The European Scene. The European continent offers more case studies than actual attempts to formulate theologies such as one finds in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

An example is the Mission Academy of Germany.[13] This institution encourages dialogue between German and Third World theologians who are invited to the Academy. The stated goal is not to create theology for the Third World but, through discussions and seminars, to come to a theological understanding with the Third World. German pastors and missionaries are given opportunity to understand the religious, economic and political situations of these overseas countries through the dialogues. The whole endeavour seems to serve the twofold purpose of creating German awareness of Third-World situations and of providing a way to train German middle-class theologians to relate to the needs of the lower class in Germany.

Britain provides the Sheffield Urban Theology Unit[14] which is an ecumenical institution that attempts to integrate theology and sociology to serve the church and community. The institution writes about contemporary theology and runs courses in "creative theology." The sociological dimension is evidenced in the concern for the contemporary life of man as the institute tackles problems of urbanization and industrialisation. The students are made up of ministers, theologians, church people, sociologists and politicians, who, together, constitute a theological community.

Much of what was presented above from Africa, Asia and the Americas constitutes reactionary movements in an attempt to tackle socio-political and cultural issues that are too often ignored by the church. In our theological endeavours we ought to realize that there is a sense in which theologies are localized even in what passes as "Biblical Theology." In other words, theologies could be both "ethnic" as well as "global"[15]. By ethnicity I do not mean a theology that looks inward and cuts itself off from the community of God's people the world over. Ethnicity here is another term for a localized emphasis in theology. If there is a pressing issue local to any culture of the world, Christian theologians within the community of faith ought to address those issues. In the sense that certain issues may be localized then theologies thus formulated regarding those local issues cannot be other than local or "ethnic."

Often we hide behind the label "Biblical Theology" when we push off a global emphasis. There are theological categories that will be common to all the communities of faith the world over. Many such categories include the body of doctrines that have been passed down through the ages. However, even when considering those great doctrines such as the Trinity, Election, the Atonement, etc., we ought not to forget the interpretive frame of reference. In interpreting those doctrines, we often betray our particular cultural and

philosophical bents. And so, in areas we call "global," we still betray "ethnicity." When we begin to come to this realization, we will begin to appreciate the import of contextual theologies. We will then begin to acknowledge that a particular cultural expression of our Christian faith might not have said the last word that needs to be said concerning those great doctrines. We will all then look at the body of believers from cultures other than our own with anticipation that the good Lord could still teach us all through one another.

One might then ask, what are the crucial differences between what was described above as "theologies of contextualization" and contextualized theology that is here advocated? Four differences are perceived.

Crucial Differences

Contextual theology as here advocated takes a different view from the theologies of contextualization described above in four areas: the view of theology, the data base for theologising, the authority base in theologising, and the hermeneutical principles employed.

As to the view of theology, most of the theologies mentioned above adopt a purely discourse view. Quite often theology does not go beyond ecclesiastical discourse: once a churchman speaks formally on issues, it constitutes theology. Hence you have political theology, cultural theology, etc.

However, I am looking at theology as the reverent task of collecting, interpreting and arranging materials pertaining to God's self-revelation and living in obedience to that which God has revealed.[16]

As to data base, I am advocating two separate and legitimate sources. The one constitutes an absolute data base and the other a relative data base. The one absolute source of data for theologising is the Bible,

God's inscripturated Word. The other, which is relative, is man's contemporary social and cultural setting. The distinction constitutes a marked difference between the theologies of contextualization and contextual theology that I am proposing. In the former, the data base is primarily found in the area I termed relative, while very little is drawn from the absolute. I must also point out that the marked tendency in our evangelical theologies is to draw our categories solely from the absolute data base to the neglect of the relative data base. However, I think a contextual evangelical theology ought to let the absolute data confront the relative data. Thus we will allow the absolute Word of God to speak to our contemporary social, cultural, economic and political situations. Too often we confuse legitimate distinctions that exist between data base and authority base. These two are not the same. I think the confusion of the two is what has led to the neglect of the relative but legitimate data base. Hence we continue to be labelled, "theologians who are answering questions nobody is asking."

As to the authority base, we again see a very sharp distinction between theologies of contextualization and contextualized theology. In contextualizing theology, the Christian theologian ought to have as the supreme court of appeal in matters of faith and conduct, the absolute Word of God inscripturated. However, in many of the theologies described above, man in his subjectivism serves as the final authority. For the evangelical theologian, a careful distinction ought to be observed between data and authority. It is true that in one sense, what constitutes an absolute data base also serves as authority base. Here we see a dual role which we will do well to observe.

As to hermeneutical principles, a clear distinction could also be observed. For some of the theologies described above, the allegorical method pervades their hermeneutic. Often there is manifested a flagrant disregard for the historicity of the portions of the

Bible under investigation. In contextualizing theology as I am advocating, due regard must be given to the immediacy of the Bible message. In so far as the Bible came to us through particular cultures in the original context due regard ought to be given to the meaning from that original context and then how that meaning is transmitted into our particular cultures of today. Here Pike's emic-etic distinctions could help us in hermeneutics. After we have taken the first two steps indicated above - deriving meaning from the perspective of the original context and faithful transmission of that meaning to our particular contemporary cultures - can we then seek to apply the meaning derived to our contemporary situations.

Contextualized theology ought to confront the fruits of the faithful interpretation of the Word of God with our contemporary life settings at the level of application. At the same time a contextualized theology ought to be open constantly to new situations either calling for a re-thinking of theological emphases or the categories employed. We must realize that much as the church ought to continue to benefit from the lessons and teachings of previous generations, each generation ought to be able to identify the relevant issues that the church's theology must address. At the same time the community of faith the world over ought to recognise and appreciate differences as well as commonalities of theological emphases across cultures.

Attention is now shifted to the process of contextualizing theology within our particular cultures the world over.

The Process

In contextualizing theology there are four crucial factors. These factors will enhance contextualization if they are adequately taken care of. The discussion that follows is not necessarily according to the order of importance.

The Philosophical Factor. By philosophy I mean the total world and life view as well as the thought patterns of both the original contexts in which the Bible was given as well as those of the interpreters of the Bible today. Bible scholars are no strangers to what is referred to as Hebrew thought forms or Graeco-Roman thought forms. Occasionally as one reads the Jewish writers of the New Testament, one comes across "Hebraisms." Thought forms as well as world views are essential to the understanding of customs, habits, behaviours and messages intra- or interculturally.

A Christian theologian must combine an understanding of the thought patterns, world and life views of the biblical settings with those of his own contemporary culture. The understanding of the former will likely enhance the understanding of the original message in thought forms that are familiar to the latter.

A casual acquaintance with western Christian theologies soon reveals the heritage that is rooted in Aristotelian logic. Neither Thomistic nor Augustinian theology is free from the influence of Greek thought forms. Depending on which communion one belongs to in the Western church, either one of these two theologies has left its indelible print on theologies as known today.

To successfully contextualize theology within a given culture today, both the thought forms, world and life views of the Bible as well as those of the contemporary culture must be well understood by the theologian. Should a theologian then seek to go across cultures, those third thought patterns, world and life views must also be taken into account. In the final analysis, it does not really matter in what thought pattern theology is presented as long as the thought pattern is that of the recipient of the theology. The real issue is not whether theological postulates are presented *a posterion* or *a priori* as long as the original Bible meanings are faithfully reflected. It seems to me that God allows us freedom in thought forms so long as the

original message is kept intact.

Cultural Factor. Culture has been described as the total way of life of a people. In that regard, it embraces thought patterns, and world and life views. However, culture is here delineated to emphasize this fact that there are differences in cultural appreciations of particular teachings of the Bible. The degrees of appreciation often have to do with the degree to which there are cultural points of contact between the biblical context and a particular contemporary culture. At other times, the appreciation stems out of a greater awareness or a greater need in a particular contemporary culture over another one.

If theology is to be also live and not just a matter of mental assent, the contemporary social-cultural factor must come to the foreground. The social-cultural factor must then provide the theologian with the constantly changing data which represent man's situation in life. These relative data must then be interfaced with the absolute Word of God inscripturated. To engage the Word of God in a face to face confrontation with our situation in life is to strive to apply the absolute Word inscripturated to our lives. The cultural diversities of our world necessitates differences in emphases hence the ethnicity discussed above.

Linguistic Factor. Language is a vehicle of communication. It is also included in a comprehensive approach to the meaning of culture. However, language is singled out because of the importance it holds in communication. At this stage the reader will begin to sense that the essence of contextualization is adequate communication.

Language conveys concepts and thought forms. Concepts are in turn reduced to symbols and codes. When we get into the realm of symbols and codes we are presupposing the need for communication and the ability to communicate. When we use symbols and codes, we are necessari-

ly dealing with meanings. Interpretation is therefore a quest for meaning which must be traced back to its context. The quest for the meaning of symbols out of the context in which the symbols were originally employed is likely to introduce alien thought.

The Christian theologian who wants to contextualize ought to be able to work with the biblical languages, so he can have a feel for word concepts as close as possible to the original context. However, this feeling for word concepts is no excuse for purely lexical studies that too often pass for exegesis. Meaning of concepts must be traced back to their original context. Hence, contextual use of language ought always to take precedence in the process of theologising.

Hermeneutical Factor. Without trying to give the impression that evangelical hermeneutics have arrived, one must commend some of the principles already laid down. In the quest for meaning, priority ought to be given at all times to the context of the passage in question. Also vital in the quest for contextual meaning is the principle of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

Underlying the two points mentioned is respect for the historicity of the Biblical records. Due consideration ought to be given to the primary recipients of the Word. An understanding of the context of writing enhances our own understanding of the message of the Bible. Consequently, such an understanding enhances our ability to apply the message of the absolute Word of God inscripturated to our particular contexts and cultures.

Amidst the on-going discussion about the need for a renaissance in evangelical hermeneutics[17] I am proposing for consideration what I have called the "uncertainty factor." This is the need to keep our hermeneutical door ajar at all times hoping first for improvement in methodology and, second, for improvement in our

understanding of some of the portions of Scripture whose meanings are not yet clear to us. In short, we ought to readily admit ignorance or uncertainty where we are really not sure. Those areas may involve particular portions or even an entire hermeneutical system.

Conclusion

The marks left behind in any theology by the four factors discussed above form the characteristics of that theology. In as much as there are differences in philosophies, cultures, and languages, theology will necessarily reflect particular local colour. However, local emphases do not preclude common assumptions or emphases, even if the commonalities also betray localities. One's hermeneutic will make or break one's theology. However, through all of these the theologian must humbly realize that it is the absolute and inscripturated Word of God that is inspired and not his own theology.

Notes

1 Ross F. Kinsler, "Mission and Context: The Current Debate About Contextualization," **Evangelical Missions Quarterly**, 14 (January, 1978) p. 24.

2 "Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund" (1970-77), Bromley: T.E.F. Fund, October 1972, p. 20.

3 The reason for making the distinction seems to be because indigenization has been seen as a paternalistic relationship between the western and the non-western churches. Much of the recent attempts to contextualize have, however, been carried out by non-westerners. For more discussion of this point consult the article by James Oliver Buswell III, "Contextualization: Is it only a New Word for Indigenization?" **Evangelical Missions Quarterly**, 14 (January 1978), p. 16.

4 Some examples from western theological circles include positions expressed by Harvie M. Conn, "Contextualization: A New Dimension for Cross-cultural Hermeneutic," **Evangelical Missions Quarterly**, 14 (January 1978) p. 44, Here, Conn describes contextualization as a "cross-cultural hermeneutic." Also in the same journal, Ross F. Kinsler, "Mission and Context: The current debate about contextualization," pp. 28ff. Kinsler sees contextualization embracing all that indigenization stands for and more - including the relation of the gospel to the social and economic areas of life.

5 Sholei Coe, "In Search of Renewal in Theological Education," **Theological Education**, 9 (1973) p. 243.

6 Harvie M. Conn, "Contextualization: A New Dimension for Cross-cultural Hermeneutic," **Evangelical Missions Quarterly**, 14 (January 1978) pp. 40-41.

7 For a more comprehensive discussion of the biblical basis for contextualization consult Victor B. Cole, **A Biblical Approach to Contextualization of Theology**, Th.M thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979. The biblical basis presented in the fourth chapter.

8 John S. Mbiti, "Theology of the New World: Some Current Concerns of African Theology," **The Expository Times**, 87 (March, 1976), pp. 164-68.

9 In Klaus Klostermaier, **Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban** (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 109-12.

10 In Kosuke Koyama, "Syncretism and Accommodation," **OMF Bulletin**, (Singapore: OMF, October, 1972), pp. 101-8.

11 Kasoh Kitamori, **Theology of the Pain of God** (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 10.

12 Gustavo Gutierrez, **A Theology of Liberation**, trans. and ed. by Inda Caridad and John Eagleson (New York: Orbis Books, 1973).

13 "Learning in Context: The Search for Innovative Patterns in Theological Education," **Theological Education Fund** (Bromley, England: New Life Press, 1973) pp. 139ff.

14 **Theological Education Fund**, p. 117.

15 Writers on "African Theology" such as Fashole-Luke, An Indigenous Theology: Fact or Fiction?" Seminar Paper on Christianity and the Non-Western World, University of Aberdeen, 1970, have eschewed ethnicity in theology, and have maintained that African Theology must take on a global perspective.

16 I am adopting here the *Logia* distinction according to evidences from Adolf Deissman, **Bible Studies** (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 143 and Friedrich Blass, **Grammar of the New Testament Greek** (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 376. See also Deissman, **Light from the Ancient East** (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), p. 104. This position is in contrast to the more popular but etymologically indefensible Logia view that has led to definitions such as "A discourse of (about) God."

17 Conn, pp. 40-41, has pointed out some of the assumptions in evangelical hermeneutic necessitating a re-thinking of our hermeneutical system.

AN INTRODUCTION TO INDEPENDENT AFRICAN CHURCHES

Cornelius Abiodum Olowola

The African Independent Churches are the fastest growing churches in Africa today. They are having so much impact on the missionary-founded churches that in December 7, 1981 an issue of **West African Magazine** had an article titled "Desertions of the Orthodox Churches - Changes in Worship."

Because these churches are growing fast and have great influence upon the people of Africa, it is necessary to investigate their beliefs. It will then be necessary to briefly discuss what these churches are, why they grow, and what part of their theological beliefs make them acceptable to the people.

Definition

Various definitions have been given by various authors and observers of African Independent Churches. This is Barrett's definition:

> the formation and existence within a tribe or tribal unit, temporarily or permanently, of any organized religious movement with a distinct name and membership even as small as a single organized congregation, which claims the title Christian in that it acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord, and which has either separated by secession from a mission church or an existing African

> Independent Church, or has been founded outside the mission churches as a new kind of religious entity under African initiative and Leadership.[1]

A close and realistic definition is given by Kofi Appian-Kubi of Ghana. He defines African Independent Churches as:

> . . . churches founded by Africans for Africans in our special African situations. They have all African membership as well as all African leadership. Some were founded by Africans in reaction to some feature of the Christianity of missionary societies; most were founded among those people who had known Christianity the longest.[2]

This latter definition prefers to identify the African Independent Churches as Indigenous African Christian Churches.

How independent? The question one needs to ask is are these churches truly independent or indigenous? Yes, to a certain extent they are independent, but they still have some relationship with the older churches and also among themselves.

Harold W. Turner gave four ways in which the African Independent Churches still have relationships with the older churches. Turner writes: There has often been an informal and unstructured relationship of inter-dependence between the older and the independent churches, whereby they performed different services for each other's members.[3]

First, they are related to each other in the services that are performed for each other.

> Those from the older churches often sought the services of a prophet or healer among the independents, and usually somewhat secretly, while the independents used church or mission schools for the education of their

> children, church bookshops and journals for their literature, and even retained a second membership in order to secure a proper church burial or for other specific services.[4]

Second, some of the independent churches still have affiliation with the older Christian bodies from overseas and in Africa for training their ministers. Third, many leaders of African Independent Churches attend some international gatherings. "Thus Yeboa-Kurie of Ghana's Eden Revival Church and others visited the World Pentecostal Assembly in Texas in 1970 and independent leaders are now likely to be present at some World Council of Churches meetings."[5] Fourth, they still look for financial assistance from overseas.

Since many countries in Africa are becoming independent there has been more understanding among the African Independent Churches than before. They now come to the awareness of a common goal and that is to bring Africans to Christ. However, because of personality clashes and theological differences they have not been able to form a united church. One can conclude that these churches are somewhat independent but still look for help from older churches and have seen the need of various groups coming together for only one purpose and that is Christ for Africa but there are still barriers.

The Rise and Growth of Independent Churches

Africa has her world view and it is necessary that any missionary who will work in Africa must understand this world view. Barrett writes:

> For centuries, the foundations of culture in African tribes have rested on a number of dynamic institutions and beliefs found in varying form in all parts of the continent, and which, within a given tribe centre on the family and on the home.[6]

It is this world view of the people which are well

observed by these churches that brought about their rise and growth. There are various reasons why churches are begun and why some separate from the older churches. Barrett also gave eight reasons.[7] Barrett's reasons should be well noted. They are, first, historical factors. Barrett gave examples of the Church Missionary Society in Nyanza which refused to give authority to African clergy and so a group broke away and began what is known as the Church of Christ in Africa.

Second, are political factors. The movements arose because of political oppression in one form or another. They were political protest movements arising out of political frustration. William Wade Harris' removal of the Liberian flag was an example of his political frustration. His repatriation charges from Ivory Coast in 1914 will reveal what the government thought of the reason for these movements.

> From information coming to me from different sources, it appears that the moral-improving activity of the Prophet William Wade Harris is interpreted in a different fashion by the natives and is hampered in a rather unfortunate way mainly by his imitators, improvised pastors recruited from among the clerks severed, often for delicate reasons, from their counters.
>
> So it is that one administrator has told me about the rumour circulating in his circle that Harris was going to succeed in obtaining before long a reduction in the rate of tax and even the suppression of capitation.
>
> In the impossible situation in which the much reduced personnel from the circles now find themselves, the doings of these more or less religious personages cannot be watched closely enough; therefore you will invite the pretended "Sons of God" who have been roaming to the villages recently to return to their own country where they will be able to spread the good word easily. The Prophet Harris in particular will find in Liberia,

> his own country, a sufficiently vast field for activity (quoted in Haliburton 1971:139).[8]

Third, economic factors. Aristotle's theory said "the causes of revolution are to be found in inequality, particularly in the separation of economic and political power.[9] The basic background out of which movements emerge is economic deprivation; "they are economic protest movements directed against exploitation of tribal lands or other riches by Colonial powers."[10] There are also those who believe in starting a Church for economic reasons.

Fourth, sociological factors. These can be viewed in three areas: in South Africa, it is a reaction against apartheid; in East and Central Africa it is a reaction against land occupation of the white settlers and in other areas it is a reaction against social injustice of different types.

Fifth, ethnic factors. Kuper made this observation in 1946 noting that among the Swazi separatism led to further separatisms. She commented:

> The fissiparous tendency is . . . a characteristic of the traditional tribal structure. It was part of the clan structure until clan divisions were checked with growth of a strong centralized and hereditary kingship; thereafter it continued in the structure of the homestead and is evident in disputes over succession and the splitting of the kinship unit on the death of the patriarch.[11]

Barrett affirmed that:

> Ethnic factors by themselves are obviously not responsible for the rise of independency, but taken together with the other types of factors they occupy an important place in the long chain of causation. The phenomenon has not been foisted upon African societies from outside; it has roots in traditional society.[12]

Sixth, non-religious factors. All the above mentioned reasons are non-religious factors. In a study of the types and dynamics of African religious movements, Fernandez asserted that most of the examples of churches within the separatist category had in fact "separated from European-dominated parent organizations for non-religious reasons".[13]

Seventh, religious factors. Harold Turner sees the phenomena as primarily spiritual and religious "striving for cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy."[14]

Eighth, theological factors. The theological factors are not so much on doctrine as practice. For example, the Sudan Interior Mission in the early 40's had this experience when some people broke away from some of their churches because of church practices like polygamy, drumming and dancing.

It has been said in the introduction to this paper that African Independent Churches are the fastest growing Christian body in Africa today. The reasons given for the growth are that these churches' goal was to bring Africans to Christ via media that is understandable to Africans and more relevant messages that meet the needs of the Africans. Unlike the older churches the independent churches are not growing biologically. Hence they have extensive outreach through healing ministries. Kubi writes:

> But the most important single reason why people join the Indigenous African Christian Churches is healing. This came out quite clearly in the research in the question "why did you join this particular church?" People invariably and quickly replied that they had been ill for a long time, they had tried all forms of treatment to no avail, they were directed to, for example Prophet Prah, and behold, they are fit as a fiddle: Praise the Lord, Hallelujah.[15]

Other reasons for expansion were the indigenization of

worship. Kubi writes: "The Indigenous African churches, through careful and concrete adaption of certain cultural elements into their worship, have made Christianity real and meaningful to their African adherents."[16] I will deal with this aspect of worship under the theology of African Independent Churches.

The Theological Beliefs of Independent Churches

As one approaches this topic, one is aware of the limitation of literature that is available on the subject. Few independent churches have articles of faith.

I prefer to write on the theological beliefs and practices which are tools for the growth of these Churches.

Visions and Revelations

The belief in visions and revelations is the centre of the doctrinal practices of Independent African Churches. Many of their leaders claimed to have visions or revelations.

One such founder was William Wade Harris, born in 1865 in Liberia. Harris claimed he saw the angel Gabriel in his vision while in a prison cell and that the angel gave him a message:

> Gabriel's message to Harris was that he had been designated as God's last prophet whose mission was to carry His Word to those people who had not yet heard it. Those people who did not heed the message would soon be destroyed by fire. This event was at the origin of a mass movement that revolutionized the religious life of most of the southern Ivory Coast.[17]

Another example was the founder of the Celestial Church of Christ. The Celestial Church of Christ was founded in 1947 in the Republic of Benin by Samuel Bileou Oschoffa, a carpenter of Gun and Yoruba origin. Like Harris in Liberia, Oschoffa was educated in the Metho-

dist tradition. In an interview by Nigerian Television Authority, published by **Drum Magazine**, Pastor Oschoffa said:

> My actual name is not Oschoffa. It is Oju Kise Ofa, which means that you cannot kill someone by merely looking at him since the eye is not an arrow. It was however shortened to Oschoffa. My grandfather, a farmer named Ojo was a native of Abeokuta in Ogun State of Nigeria. He, as a farmer travelled to Idasa Village, and during the war my father then a carpenter was taken prisoner of war to Cotonou where I was born. I did not commit any crime in Benin, I have only come back to my country, Nigeria.[18]

After a three-month sojourn in the bush, Pastor Oschoffa claimed to have received a vision in which he was commissioned to found a church and the name of the church was also given to him in a vision.

The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu was founded by a young man named Simon Kimbangu who was educated at a Baptist mission near Nkamba in Zaire. His vision for founding the church is as follows:

> In 1918 a serious flu epidemic took thousands of lives, and many other Kongo died as a result of forced labor on a government railroad project. At this time Kimbangu heard a voice telling him: "I am Christ, my servants are unfaithful. I have chosen you to witness to your brethren and to convert them."[19]

Kimbangu's reactions to his call was like that of Moses. Kimbangu resisted the call with the idea that others can do better. Also like Jonah, he fled to Kinshasa to escape the call. Things did not go well for him at Kinshasa and so he returned to his home. "In 1921 the Holy Spirit took him against his will to a sick woman's house in a nearby village and told him to heal her. He laid his hands on her in the name of

Jesus Christ and she became well."[20]

Another example from South Africa will illustrate the point. The Nazareth Church was founded by the Zulu Prophet/Messiah, Isaiah Shembe, who claimed that he received a *series of revelations* from Jehovah. In the revelations he was to abstain from sex, abandon his wives and leave his village. According to Ray,

> These revelations occurred during thunderstorms, a traditional Zulu mode of revelation. Shembe's last and decisive call occurred during a storm when lightning struck and killed his best ox and burned Shembe on the thigh. Refusing treatment from a traditional healer,[21] Shembe declared, "Jehovah has revealed to me that I must not be healed by medicine - only through His Word."[22]

Finally, one illustration from Nigeria will conclude the doctrine of visions and revelations in Independent African Churches. Prophetess Mary Omotara Audifferen of Nigeria went on a spiritual pilgrimage during which, in her own account, she said, "I met Jesus Christ, heard the voice of God, saw the Garden of Eden and heard the music of angels."[23]

According to Innocent Ezeh of **Spear Magazine** "The spirit of this 42 year old woman ascended to the unknown after a covenant between church elders at Cherubim and Seraphim movement at Ireti-Ogo, Orile-Oshodi, near Lagos. The covenant was that Mary who had been ill will fall on into a 91 day trance."[24] Ezeh continued his report, "According to a competent church spokesman, falling into a trance simply means going to know, through His own call, the secrets of God's power for mankind. The person in trance is an intermediary between God and human beings. He or she passes God's message to man."[25] Ezeh of **Spear Magazine** said Mary gave her account thus:

> When a blessing borne out of spiritual grace of God

> befalls an individual, the receiver spiritually abandons the physical body and sleeps into the land of God's spirits for the purposes of gathering information.
>
> It is a blessing, it is wonderful, it is challenging and it is stunning to the world of metaphysics. You are compelled by the will of God to serve in the invisible world.
>
> I made 30 days journey under water, 30 days in the sky, and 30 days in the Garden of Eden (Paradise) where I came face to face with Jesus Christ in His human appearance. I did not see God, but I heard a voice telling me that I should not bother about seeing God. He is only the person one can never see.
>
> In Paradise, I saw myself with a wing just like the angels. There was something like a film that the angels showed to me.[26]

Concluding her story, Mary said, "There and then, He sent his message to the world through us, myself and angels, who held me in high esteem. Such messages included how to make barren women fertile through the power of prayer as well as how to redeem suffering humanity."[27]

Here we are stressing visions as claimed by prophets and prophetesses. It is also through these visions that they claimed to have powers to heal (discussed later in this article). The above vision or trance is an interesting one because solid theology of their church is based on this and little flavour of African beliefs.

Mary claimed in her vision or trance that she was not only given power to heal but also was privileged to see or witness a series of judgements upon people. She saw girls receiving punishment for their immorality and parents for failing to show their children how to live

a good life. Other messages are that the living children are also to pray for their dead parents and, finally, Moslems are warned to resist from violence, and bitterness, have a hate-free religion and fear God. According to Ezeh of **Spear Magazine**, "Members say she did not eat for 91 days."[28]

Dreams

Dreams also have an important place in Independent African Churches. Falk writes:

> Dreams are considered important by Africans and also by the Zionist and Messianic Movements. Dreams are believed to be sent by ancestors. The people act according to their interpretation of the message they feel they have received. They share dreams with each other as significant messages. The community regards the dreams as such.[29]

Prophecies

There seems to be no difference between revelations and prophecies but I have decided to write on prophecy separately. Oshitelu, the founder of the Aladura Churches in Nigeria, wrote down his prophecies. These prophecies are also called revelations and they are many. The prophecies are similar to that of the Old Testament prophets. An example of this is an outbreak of a severe plague in the Yoruba land in the 1920's of which Ray writes, "The present trials are God's Judgment; only faith in God, the power of prayer and the abandonment of paganism can overcome them."[30] This was the message of the Aladuras. Turner provides a summary of a ten-point outline of Oshitelu's message during this sudden upheaval. Turner writes:

> The first three points address Christians, Muslims and pagans; The Christians have strayed and disobeyed God, the Muslims have shunned his precepts, and the pagans have been idolaters. The next three predict the immi-

> nence of judgement through locusts, famine and war - all as part of the Gospel of Joy - for all the world is old and broken, but it will be changed immediately, for the kingdom of God is at hand. The last four points of this gospel condemn native doctors and promise divine healing, the curing of all woes and ailments, through the water of life which is given to all who believe in God. The messsage may be summed up as an offer of blessings in all one's troubles through faith in God alone, with judgment for those who fail to respond.[31]

Another example of prophecy by Captain Abiodun for the year 1970 is quoted from **Drum Magazine** of June 1970. Abiodun prophesied:

> More children will be born this year than in any year in the past. . . . There will be an acute shortage of drinking water this year. Violence will be on the increase. There will be more cases of armed burglary and highway robbery. There will be an alarming rate of unemployment. Two top leaders will die this year and there will be many fatal motor accidents on Nigerian roads. There will be a famine in 1970 as well as an epidemic of plague, though smaller than in 1918. Plenty of money but scarcity of goods.[32]

From these examples, one sees that the independent church followed what to them are revelations and prophecies. Some of them claimed to be Elijah or Moses while others claimed to be the Messiah.

The second area of prophecy could be described as divination. Ray writes that "people ask their minister for special revelations concerning personal problems. Prophecies may also be obtained regarding significant events within the church."[33]

Worship

Worship is the avenue through which African Independent Churches express their beliefs and practices. It was

here that there is an obvious mixture of Christianity and tradition. Some observers appreciate it and call it "the indigenization of worship."[34] Kubi who made these remarks continued, "If the churches in Africa are to grow and develop, they must be allowed to take root in the soil of Africa where they have been planted. In the Africanization process, the indigenous African churches have made a breakthrough and have a great deal to teach the missionary churches."[35] Ray confirmed that there are importations of African tradition in the worship. Ray declares:

> Another direct importation from the traditional sphere is spirit possession. This is a common occurrence in the church of the Lord, especially during public worship when, at the climax of the service, members of the congregation come forward to dance, sing and testify to God's saving power. These acts are used to induce possession.[36]

Adejoji who succeeded Oshitelu said, "Why do you need to sing, dance, clap and engage in all sorts of lively entertainments before the Holy Spirit could descend? Because sweet songs, drums and the like are relished goods of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would therefore descend on hearing them."[37]

Prayer

Belief in the power of prayer is a prominent feature of the Church of the Lord. Africans in general believe in the efficacy of prayer. Hence, the Church of the Lord uses this means to help the growth of their church. The Yoruba name for this group is "Aladura," i.e., the praying ones. This group prepares prayer booklets and techniques and each member is instructed to pray every three hours, day and night. Midnight prayers are believed to be more effective. Often they pray all night and some pray on the top of mountains, hills and by seashores. These prayer times are seen as a time of struggling and wrestling. In Turner's view, it is a

"special form of the wider concept of strenuous endeavor, and emphasizes the earnestness, frequency, and importunity of prayer."[38]

Adejobi explained the reasons behind this in the following words: "If we are tired of praying then we shall resort to human means of protection", namely paganism. But "God will never be tired to hear and to render your request to you."[39] The pattern of their prayer is adoration, confession, intercessions, petitions and thanksgiving. Turner observed, "as in the Orisa cults [they pray for] healing or the gift of children, promotion, business prosperity or examination success."[40] Turner gives an illustration of a prayer prepared by a Prophet for a student thus:

> Make me holy for my blessing. Send me this moment Divine helpers, Divine Intelligence, Divine Intermediaries and gracious look of Jesus Christ my Savior. . . My examinations will come up (mention time and place) . . . I call unto Thee for success. . . . Grant that I may study the right text and passage and subject; Jesus Christ let me feel Thy influence . . . Thy breath, and Thy assistance. Send to me most powerful angels, that these may fight out for me all dangers and evil besettings, that I may not be frightened, careless, nervous, and obsessed. . . .[41]

Petitions are also made in form of special psalms and the recitation of holy names. According to Ray, "This accords with the traditional idea that ritual language and sacred praise names have an intrinsic power of their own."[42]

> An example of intercessory prayer of Kimbangu is quoted from Ndofunsu's article: He prayed for the sick and the dead, for those who were falsely accused and for enemies. He also asked God for help, given the spiritual and material poverty of mankind. He prayed for perfect unity among men, that there should be no more barriers or frontiers. He prayed for those who plotted

> against him as Saint Stephen had done (Acts 7:60). He prayed that those who had understood the aim of his mission should be steadfast in the faith particularly the sacrificers (priests) in exile and other Christians, whose persecution had begun in 1921 and were to last until 1959. He asked God to open the hearts of the unbelievers, so that they might accept the message of Christ.[43]

It is necessary here to quote an extract from one of the prayers of the prophet Kimbangu:

> I thank Thee, Almighty God, Maker of Heaven and earth. The heaven is Thy throne and the earth Thy footstool. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Bless all peoples of the earth, great and small, men and women, whites and blacks. May the blessing of heaven fall on the whole world so that we all may enter heaven. We pray to Thee trusting that Thou dost receive us, in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.[44]

Baptism

The Kimbanguist Church does not believe in water baptism. Ndofunsu writes:

> For us the baptism of water is a baptism of repentance to prepare for Christ's coming (Mark 1:4). But since Christ came and died on the cross and rose again from the dead for remission of the sins of the world, it is now the Holy Spirit who comes into the heart of mankind to reveal the possibility of repentance. If a person accepts this possibility, the Church receives him through the laying on of hands so that the Holy Spirit may dwell in him, without using water.[45]

The other independent churches either sprinkle or immerse. The Christ Apostolic Church of Nigeria will not accept baptism from other denomination unless it is in the form of immersion.

The Lord's Supper

The Kimbanguist ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come and partake of the elements which are cake made of maize flour, potato flour, flour from raw and dried bananas. Honey diluted with water represents the blood.

This is celebrated three times a year. April 6, October 12, and December 25. The elements are taken by the participants on their knees. Some other independent churches celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly. It forms part of their worship. What the elements really represent do not pose serious problem to the leaders and members. Here again, the African religious world view manifests itself.

Naming Ceremony

Kubi writes: "The birth of a baby is the greatest blessing for the family and to a large extent for the community as a whole."[46] Among the Akans of Ghana and the Yorubas of Nigeria and probably other ethnic groups in Africa, a child does not belong to the family until it is eight days old. It is on the eighth day that the child is named. According to Kubi's observation, "The general assumption is that if by the seventh or eighth day the child still lives, then the ancestors, the gods and the Supreme God have blessed the child for the family. At times it is simply said that the Ghost-mother has relinguished the child into the world of the living."[47] Here, it will suffice us to use the Church of Messiah in Ghana as an example.

In the Church of Messiah in Ghana, when a baby is born, the baby is taken to the church on the eighth day and the father will choose three names which will be presented to the spiritual father, who through meditation, selects the right name for the child.

In the ceremony, the spiritual father first drops water three times into the child's mouth saying, "The whole

congregation will be a witness to your life, and when you say 'yes' it is 'yes' and 'no' must be 'no.' Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no', 'no.'" Then the spiritual father takes salt and says,

> This day I give you salt, and according to the Bible you are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot. Therefore from this day may your life be like salt and may all trials and temptations which may be in your way be wiped away now and forever.[48]

Then the congregation will say "Amen." Finally, the spiritual father takes honey and says, "This day I give you honey which is the witness of all mankind. May this honey wipe away all trials and temptations. Amen." The spiritual father then pronounces the name of the child and says "We do not give you this name for you to be lazy, but rather that you should take up the cross of Christ and follow him in the wilderness, in the bush, and in the villages. In the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Marriage

Marriage is an interesting occasion in African Independent Churches. We will use the Aladura Church as an example. The marriage is based on the traditional system of African marriage. Kubi writes, "Instead of employing gold rings, wedding cakes, and other expensive articles used by the missionary churches, the Aladuras for example, use eight different symbols."[49] The symbols are the Bible as a sign of fidelity between the couple. The banana plant is used to represent many children. (In the African world view many children are the hope of all marriages.) The coconut signifies maturity and the secret blessing of God. Kubi explaining this says: "Just as no one knows how the milk gets into the nut so no one knows how the two are chosen by

God for marriage."[50] An orange is present to symbolize a sound body and mind. Bitter kola nuts symbolize long life and the wisdom and knowledge of God. Salt is given with the words, "You are the salt of the earth; may you never lose your savor, but be a benefit to society." Honey is a sign of sweet marriage relationships with no bitterness. Finally, a seven-branched candelabrum represents the prayer that the eyes of Almighty God and the living Lord may ever be upon the couple.

Music and Musical Instruments

The theology of African Independent Churches is found in their songs. Africans love singing. Messages are transmitted in songs, and song is part of their lives. However, the songs or hymns are very short. Kubi writes, "The hymns and songs of most African Independent Churches are often remarkably short and simple. They tend to be one-, two-, or three-line refrains. The contents embrace confessions, prayers and praises, with constant refrains of 'Amen,' 'Halleluja,' and 'Praise God.'"[51]

Most of these songs are sung with drums, hand clapping and dancing. The missionary churches do not accept African drums. Kubi writes:

> The African Independent Churches have wholeheartedly accepted the use of locally-made drums. The use of drums has been frowned upon by the missionary churches as pagan and therefore devilish. In fact, until recently no Christian could with impunity use any musical instrument in church except the piano and the organ, neither of which is built in Africa.[52]

Those who played the guitar were considered hooligans and unbelievers by members of the mission churches. However, in my church these instruments are now allowed to be used as well as organ and piano. To conclude it is well to quote what Sister Mary Aguina, in an article

on the Rhodesian Zionists, wrote:

> We Zionists please God with our drumming. In Psalm 149 verse 3 and 4, we read: Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with timbrel (translated as drums) and lyre (translated as the African piano). For the Lord takes pleasure in His people. . . . Here we are told to use the drum and the African piano, because we are told both drum and African piano please God. The Bible is our witness that we please God, with our drumming. But many do not understand what we are doing and they think we are playing. Look also at Psalm 150. There we read: Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with timbrel and dance. This proves that we teach only what is written in the Book. The Bible is our Teacher.[53]

Here it must be said that these churches have arguments to support their mode of worship as far as singing, drumming, and dancing are concerned. It is not necessary to impose music and musical instruments upon a people as part of the gospel.

Healing

Healing is part of the doctrinal practice of the independent churches and it forms an important aspect of their worship service. This is the primary concern of their ministry. Ray declared:

> The whole purpose of prophecy-divination in the Church of the Lord is to save men from the evils of this world. And illness is the primary concern. Despite the widespread introduction of Western medicine into West Africa, medical services are still in very short supply and the treatment given is often far from adequate. Consequently, many Africans are not entirely convinced of the effectiveness of Western medicine. There is also a tendency in the Aladura Churches to reject all Western medicine, because the African word for medicine is a generic term that does not distin-

> guish between pagan medicines, which the churches condemn, and Western medicine. There is also a tendency to reject all medicine as the work of man.[54]

Ray has given us three important reasons why people sought divine healing: first, the non-availability of adequate medical care; second, the word used in describing medicine in Yoruba does not distinguish between traditional and Western medicine; and third, the Church's attitude towards medicine as the work of man.

However, the Celestial Church of Christ has a dualistic attitude towards medicine and sickness. According to Rosalind Hackett in her research on the attitude of this church writes: "Some illnesses have natural, physical causes, such as malaria, injuries, colds, appendicitis; others are unnaturally caused by the spiritual agents of evil."[55] This church encourages those who are suffering from natural causes to visit the doctors and benefit from modern medicine. Hackett continues:

> There is nothing unholy about patent medicines or Western type medical services and the use of them is not believed to detract from the power of God. The position adopted by some Aladura Churches, notably the Christ Apostolic Church, regarding the absolute power of God in the treatment of all ailments and consequent refusal of any type of medicine is strongly criticized by the Celestial Church as tantamount to testing God.[56]

However, the Celestial Church will excommunicate any of her members who take traditional medicine and who consult native doctors or herbalists. The ideal of the Church is that the one who does so shows lack of confidence in God. Such a person is seen as looking for help from other gods.

For spiritual or unnatural illness, the person is advised to come to the church for prayer before seeking medical attention, for the evil spirit needed to be

driven away before modern medicine can do its work.

Prescription is usually done after fasting, prayer and possibly trance. Hackett observes that when any newcomer or member comes to the church for healing he is immediately directed to a prophet or prophetess. He will then go into a trance and diagnose the cause of the sickness or problem and announce certain ritual prescriptions or prayers which are to be carried out by the sufferer.[57] In case of unnatural illness, the prayer will be offered by elders and prophets with the use of candles; then holy water or oil will be applied to the ailment, or the patient will be asked to go and wash in a nearby stream. Complicated instructions are often given such as how and when the washing should be done, e.g., twice everyday for a week, then daily for a fortnight. This involvement by the patient means that he is engaged in his own cure.[58]

Two things must be said in regard to divine healing. One is that these churches are still involved in the African traditional way of healing, and second, that witches are often the cause of unnatural illnesses. Hackett says of the Celestial Church: "Many of the healing techniques and symbolic objects used by the church resemble traditional and magical curative practices."[59] In an interview by Nigerian Television Authority with the founder of Celestial Church about the use of green water, the Pastor declared, "Some people have asked me about that. It is useless, and has no bearing on the real powers of the church. It is only a mixture of green alum, water and lime. It cleanses the chest. It has nothing to do with the power of God."[60]

Dr. E.O.A. Adejohi, the Primate of the Lord "Aladura," gave some practical ways in which divine healing is done in a paper he presented at the Fourth Annual Conference of the West African Association of Theological Institutions in 1977 entitled "Facts about Faith, Psychic or Spiritual Healing." Part of it is reproduced

here:

A. Causes and Nature of Sickness
1. Spiritual sickness is caused by sin (Matt. 9:2)
2. Physical sickness is caused by unsanitary conditions.
3. Sickness of bad habit (John 8:3-11)
4. Psychic sickness is caused by incantation, evil spells, bad spirits and God's anger (1 Samuel 10:11), (Acts 13:8-11).
5. Miracle sickness - can be act of God or the devil

B. Divine Names and Spiritual Power for Healing
Dr. Adejobi writes:

> We are blessed with Divine names for the healing of each part and according to the Old Testament, these names are ascribed to God. The variety and variation of these names are attributed to different divine functions.[61]

In summary, one of the greatest reasons why the Independent Churches are growing so fast was the art of divine healing. Western medical facilities are inadequate to help the people and so they either resort to these problems and prophetesses or to traditionalists.

Theology Proper

Theology proper or the idea of God does not pose any problem to either the independent churches or African world views. However, some of the churches emphasize their idea of God from an Old Testament perspective while others see Jesus as the Great Physician. Ray writes:

> Shembe's conception of God was derived more from the Old Testament than from Zulu religion. Zulu names for God are less frequently used in the hymnbook than the Old Testament name Jehovah, associated with the Sinai revelation in thunder and lightning and the giving of

> the law. This name was most prominent in Shembe's vocabulary because it was Jehovah that gave the Sabbath law, which distinguishes the Nazarites from the other Christian Churches.[62]

The name of Jesus rarely occurred in the Nazareth Church's hymns and prayers.

Christology

There is no doubt that the Independent Churches have the idea of Christ as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world and the coming one. Falk writes, "They accept the historical Jesus as Lord and give Him a central position in their faith, even though this may be expressed in new African forms; they manifest a resurgence of the traditional African world view and customs; and they strongly affirm the right to be fully African and fully Christian, yet independent."[63]

Bibliology

The African Independent Churches have a high view of the Bible.

> The Scriptures are held in high esteem. The centrality of the Bible is striking. Earnest Bible study is one of the characteristics of the group. They purchase Bibles and distribute them. Thus the proclamation of the Word has a central place in the worship service.[64]

However, the problem is that the use of the Bible is not different from the traditional use of symbols. Members are advised to put their Bibles under their pillow so as to drive away evil forces. Interpretation of the Scripture rather than its authority is their problem. However, the Psalms and the Gospels are mostly used. This writer was unable to find copies of what people claimed to be the six and seven books of Moses. There are evidences from investigations that some lead-

ers of these churches do possess those books.

Ecclesiology

There is no evidence from the available literature of their idea of when the church began. However, these churches have little church organization. They often face serious problems when the founder dies. Hackett declares, "The organization of the Celestial Church of Christ is ostensibly structured around the centralized authority of the Pastor Founder. All major decisions, especially those of disciplinary or innovatory nature, must meet with his approval."[65] The problem of leadership succession is further revealed in the writings of Harold W. Turner. He writes:

> The problem of succession to leadership upon the death of the founder presents a particular instance of the relationship between old and new forms. Succession from father to eldest son (sometimes disputed by another son) has been not uncommon, as with Isaih Shembe to his son J.G. Shembe in 1935, and Jehu-Appiah to Matapoly Moses Jehu-Appiah in 1948 in the Musama Disco Christ's church.[66]

However, it is probable that family succession is becoming less common as churches become larger and therefore have more senior leaders and have access to better education which provides other jobs for the children of the founders.

Baeta writes:

> . . . The prophetic leaders and their helpers . . . have on the whole followed the basic pattern of organization of African communities. . . . It centers around the strong personality of its leader who is its real pivot, though use is made of all sorts of councils as well; above all it gives more scope to individuals to express themselves freely.[67]

It can be observed from the above that the African Independent Churches do not seriously consider any form of church government.

Conclusion and Evaluation

It is clear from what has been said earlier in this paper that African Independent Churches have come to stay and that they are growing rapidly.

Now, what could the evangelical churches do to help them. Here are some suggestions:

First, encourage the leaders to attend seminars and short courses, seminaries and Bible colleges, because most of these leaders have little or no formal education in the Word of God. Second, hold seminars for the lay members from time to time if opportunity is available. Third, assist the youth of these churches with scholarships to train in Bible colleges and seminaries. Finally, teach the Bible to these churches so they know that traditional religion must not be mixed with Christianity.

One can safely conclude that while some are trying to be biblical Christians, others are clearly cultic. Some are actually traditional worshippers in Christian colour. Hence, their doctrines and practices are not biblical.

Notes

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THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATION-BUILDING

John Stott

One of the most important questions facing Christians in every country today is this: What values and standards are going to dominate our national culture? Kenyan society is increasingly pluralistic. Christianity, Traditional African Religion, Islam, Marxism, secularism and new religious cults are all competing for the souls of Kenya.

For Christians this is first and foremost an evangelistic question, namely whether Jesus Christ will be given the honour due to his name. For God has super-exalted him and accorded him the supreme place of dignity and authority in the universe. It is God's will that every knee should bow to him, and that every tongue should confess him lord (Phil. 2:9-11). If this is God's desire, it must be the desire of his people also.

The question, however, has cultural implications also. Will Christians be able so to influence Kenya that the values and standards of Jesus Christ permeate its culture - its consensus on issues of social morality? its legislation? its administration of justice in the law-courts and its conduct of business in the market-place? the education of its young people in school and college? its care of the sick and elderly? its respect for the unborn? the handicapped and the senile? its attitude to dissidents and criminals? and the way of life of its citizens? Will Christ be Lord of Kenyan culture?

There can be no doubt that this is the will of Jesus Christ. He expected his followers to go out into the world, both in order to preach the gospel and make disciples, and in order to make their society more pleasing to God by being its salt and light.

> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.
>
> You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:13-16, NIV).

All of us are very familiar with salt and light. They are two of the commonest household commodities. They are in almost universal use, being found in virtually every home. Certainly everybody used them in the Palestine of Jesus' day. He would have known them since his boyhood in the Nazareth home. He must often have watched his mother use salt in the kitchen. In those days before refrigeration, salt was the best known preservative and antiseptic. It still is, wherever refrigerators are not available. So Mary would have rubbed salt into the fish and meat, or left them to soak in salty water. And she will have lit the lamps when the sun went down.

Now salt and light were the images Jesus used to illustrate the evangelistic and social influence which he intended his followers to exert in the world. He appointed the Twelve as his apostles and as the nucleus of his new society. Yet he called them 'the salt of *the earth*' and 'the light of *the world*'. What did he mean? A careful study of his statements indicates that he was teaching at least four truths.

Christians are Fundamentally Different from Non-Christians

Both images, salt and light, set the two communities in contrast to each other. On the one hand, there is 'the world' or 'the earth' which, with all its evil and tragedy, is a dark place; on the other hand, there is *you* who are to be the dark world's light. Again, the world resembles rotting meat or decaying fish, but *you* are to be its salt. In English idiom we might say that the two communities are as different as 'chalk from cheese' or 'oil from water', but Jesus said they are as different as 'light from darkness' and 'salt from decay'.

This is a major theme of the whole Bible, namely that from the wider human community God is calling out a people for himself, and that the vocation of this people is to be 'holy', that is, 'distinct'. 'Be holy', he says to them, 'because I am holy.' A particularly clear statement of this was made to the Israelites soon after the Exodus.

> The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them: "I am the Lord your God. You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the Lord your God"' (Lev. 18:1-4, NIV.)

Thus the people of Israel were to resemble neither the Egyptians nor the Canaanites. They were to resist the pressures of the surrounding culture. They were not to accommodate themselves to the prevailing fashions. They were to follow God's way, not the way of the world. Jesus implied something very similar when he said to his disciples during the Sermon on the Mount 'Do not be like them' (Matt. 6:8). They were to imitate neither the pagans nor the Pharisees around them;

they were to follow his teaching instead.

It is especially important to stress this distinction today because the current theological tendency is to underplay it. It is not uncommon to hear theologians speak of the whole human community as 'the people of God'. Highly desirable as it is that all people should be God's people, it is not, however, compatible with the teaching of the Bible to say that they are. All human beings are indeed God's creatures, even his 'offspring' (Acts 17:28), but 'the people of God' is an expression reserved in Scripture for those whom he has redeemed, and to whom in solemn covenant he has committed himself.

Christians Must Penetrate Non-Christian Society

Although spiritually and morally distinct, the followers of Jesus are not to be socially segregated. On the contrary, the light must shine into the darkness, and the salt must soak into the meat. There is no point in lighting a lamp, Jesus explained, if you then put it under a bowl, a bucket or a bed, or hide it away in a cupboard. The lighted lamp must be put on a lampstand, so that it may fulfill its intended function, namely to give light to the people in the house. Just so, the good news of Jesus Christ (who is himself the light of the world) must spread throughout the community, both verbally and visually, both by the articulation of the gospel in words and by 'your good deeds' which exemplify the gospel and make it credible, and on account of which people will glorify our heavenly Father.

Similarly, the salt has to be rubbed into the meat, or the meat has to be allowed to soak in salty water. There must be a penetration of the one by the other, or the salt will be ineffective. As the lamp does no good if it is kept in the cupboard, so the salt does no good if it stays in the salt-cellar. 'Let your light shine before men', Jesus said. He might equally have said

'let your salt permeate society'. Yet too many Christians hide away in dark cupboards, and too much Christian salt stays snugly in elegant ecclesiastical salt-cellars. In other words, we remain aloof from society. We do not immerse ourselves in the life of our nation, as Jesus' metaphors of salt and light indicate that we should.

An illustration of our evangelical tendency to insulate ourselves from the world is supplied by the traditional advice given to young people who ask 'What shall I do with my life?' At least in former generations our reply was often to construct a pyramid of vocations. Perched at the top of the pyramid has been the cross-cultural missionary. 'If you are really out and out for Christ', we have said, 'you will undoubtedly go to another country and culture as a messenger of the gospel. If, however, you are not as keen as that, you will stay at home and be a pastor. Luke-warm Christians will probably become doctors or teachers, whereas, if you go into politics or into the media you're not far from backsliding'. This pyramid of professions needs to be blown up; it is totally unbiblical. But please do not misunderstand me. It is a wonderful privilege to be a missionary or a pastor, *if God calls you to it*. But we must never give the impression that there is no alternative life-work for fully-committed Christians. The truth is that all Christians are called to ministry. 'Ministry' (*diakonia*) is a generic word. In order to make it specific, we need to add an adjective like 'evangelistic', pastoral', 'social' or 'political'. There is an urgent need for more Christian politicians and civil servants, journalists and television producers, business men and women and industrialists, educators, lawyers, playwrites, etc., who will penetrate their particular segment of secular society for Christ, and maintain his standards and values without compromise, even in a hostile environment.

Christians can Influence and Change Non-Christian Society

Both salt and light are *effective* commodities. They never leave their environment unaffected by their presence. On the contrary, they change it. When you switch on the light, the darkness is dispelled. And wherever the salt permeates, the process of decay is decelerated. If therefore Christians let their light shine before men, we should expect the darkness to diminish. And if they act like salt, we should expect social decay to be hindered.

Why is it, then, that human society continues to deteriorate? I cannot speak for Kenya, but I can for England. Materialism abounds. There is increasing racial tension, moral corruption and sexual promiscuity. One in every three marriages ends in divorce. The prisons are so overcrowded that early parole has had to be introduced. And the widespread disregard for the sanctity of human life is evidenced in the two million abortions which have been induced since the 1967 Act legalized them. Who is to blame for this landslide? Let me put it in this way:

If the house is dark at night, there is no sense in blaming the house. That's what happens when the sun goes down. The question to ask is: Where is the light? Again, if the meat goes bad and becomes inedible, there is no sense in blaming the meat. That's what happens when the bacteria are allowed to breed freely. The question to ask is: Where is the salt? So too, if society becomes corrupt (like a dark night or stinking fish), there is no sense in blaming society. That's what happens when fallen human beings are left to themselves and their selfish tendencies are unchecked. The question to ask is: Where is the church? Where is the salt and the light of Jesus? We must therefore ascribe blame where blame is due. It is hypocritical to raise our eyebrows, shrug our shoulders or wring our hands in self-righteous disapproval of the

world. Jesus Christ told *us* to be society's salt and light. If therefore darkness and rottenness abound, it is *our* fault. We need to accept responsibility and repent.

We must also accept with new determination the role which Jesus has assigned to us. The power of God has not diminished. By it human beings can be changed. So can human society. Not by Marxist revolution, however, but by a deeper and greater revolution, through the gospel of Christ. There are many examples in history of the beneficial social influences of the gospel.

The late Professor K.S. Latourette of Yale University wrote a seven-volume **History of the Expansion of Christianity.** His conclusion includes these words:

> No life ever lived on this planet has been so influential in the affairs of men (i.e. as the life of Christ through his followers). . . . From that brief life and its apparent frustration has flowed a more powerful force for the triumphal waging of man's long battle than any other ever known by the human race. . . . Through it hundreds of millions have been lifted from illiteracy and ignorance, and have been placed upon the road of growing intellectual freedom and of control over their physical environment. It has done more to allay the physical ills of disease and famine than any other impulse known to man. It has emancipated millions from chattel slavery and millions of others from thraldom to vice. It has protected tens of millions from exploitation by their fellows. It has been the most fruitful source of movements to lessen the horrors of war and to put the relations of men and nations on the basis of justice and peace.

In claiming this, we do not forget the blemishes which have spoiled Christianity's historical record. Much has been done in the name of Christ of which we are ashamed. Nevertheless, the general effect of the gospel through believers has been enormously constructive.

We must not underestimate the power which even a small minority can have in society.

This is the theme of Tom Sine's book **The Mustard Seed Conspiracy** (1981). It is subtitled 'You can make a difference in tomorrow's troubled world'. He writes:

> Jesus let us in on an astonishing secret. God has chosen to change the world through the lowly, the unassuming and the imperceptible [referring to his likening the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed]. This has always been God's strategy - changing the world through the conspiracy of the insignificant. He chose a ragged bunch of Semite slaves to become the insurgents of his new order. . . . He chose an undersized shepherd boy with a slingshot to lead his chosen people. And who would have ever dreamed that God would choose to work through a baby in a cow stall to turn this world right side up. 'God chose the foolish things . . . the weak things . . . the lowly things . . . the things that are not. . . .' It is still God's policy to work through the embarrassingly insignificant to change his world and create his future . . . just as Jesus used that first unlikely bunch of fishermen. . . .

Let me give another example. Robert Bellah is an American sociologist, a specialist in 'civil religion,' who teaches at the University of California, Berkeley, and in its Center for Japanese and Korean studies. In an interview published in a journal in 1976 he said:

> I think we should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world. In Japan a very small minority of Protestant Christians introduced ethics into politics, and has an impact beyond all proportion to their numbers. They were central in beginning the women's movement, labor unions, socialist parties, and virtually every reform movement. The quality of a culture may be changed when 2% of its people have a new vision.

Christians Must Retain Their Christian Distinctives

The salt must retain its saltiness, Jesus said. Otherwise it is useless. It cannot even be put on the compost heap. It has to be thrown away. Similarly, the light must retain its brightness. Otherwise it does little or no good. Just so, we Christians have to fulfill two conditions if we are to influence society for good. First, we must penetrate it, and secondly we must refuse to become conformed to it. We have to be 'in it, but not of it' in Jesus' well-known expression. Some Christians live a very upright life, but remain isolated from human society. Others immerse themselves in the world, but in so doing become assimilated to it. We have to avoid both mistakes. 'Penetration without assimilation' is the principle. Above all, we must maintain our Christian convictions, ideals and standards, and have the courage to be different from the world around us.

What, then, are our Christian distinctives which we must not compromise? What is this Christian 'light' which has to shine, and this Christian 'saltiness' which has to be retained? The rest of the Sermon on the Mount answers these questions. It paints a portrait of the citizens of God's Kingdom. Although there is much detail in it which we could consider, I will seek to draw out just three of its main emphases.

First, Jesus calls us to *a greater righteousness*. 'Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law', he said, 'you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 5:20). The disciples must have been dumbfounded by this statement. For the Scribes and Pharisees were the most righteous people in the community. From their study of the Old Testament they calculated that it contained 613 rules and regulations (248 commandments and 365 prohibitions), and they claimed to have kept them all. Now Jesus said that entry into the Kingdom was impossible

without a greater righteousness than theirs. It was unbelievable. How could they possibly be more righteous than the most righteous people on earth? He must be joking. He could not be serious. But Jesus was quite serious. Christian righteousness is *greater* than Pharisaic righteousness because it is *deeper*. The Pharisees were content with an external conformity to the law, while Jesus demanded the radical obedience of the heart. 'Blessed are the pure in heart', he said.

He went on to give two illustrations from the prohibitions of murder and adultery. The law said, 'You shall not commit murder', and the Pharisees claimed to have obeyed this commandment, because they limited its application to the deed. But Jesus said that one can commit murder by words of insult and even by unjustified feelings of anger. It was the same with adultery. Jesus insisted that the demands of this prohibition also extended beyond the deed to the eyes of both flesh and fantasy: 'Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Matt. 5:28).

So Christian righteousness is heart-righteousness. It includes those deep and secret places of the human personality which nobody sees but God, and which are usually the last fortress to surrender to his authority. Yet without heart-righteousness we cannot enter the kingdom, for heart-righteousness is impossible without a new heart, a new heart depends on a new birth, and new birth is indispensable to Kingdom citizenship.

Secondly, Jesus calls us to *a wider love*. 'You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbour and hate your enemy"' (Matt. 5:43). No such words occur in the Old Testament. They are a scandalous misquotation. Leviticus 19:18 said 'Love your neighbor as yourself' and stopped there. But this led the Scribes to ask who their neighbour was and to answer by giving themselves a narrow definition, in order to make the commandment

easier to obey. Their neighbour, according to their evasive casuistry, was their fellow-Jew, their co-religionist, their kith and kin. Therefore, since it was only their neighbour they had to love, they argued, the law left them free to hate their enemy, and even by implication commanded them to do so. They thus manipulated God's law to justify their racial prejudice and hatred.

But Jesus flatly contradicted them. It was not Moses' law (what stood 'written') with which he disagreed, but the scribal distortions of it (what was 'said'). He insisted that the command to love the neighbour had no religious, racial or personal limitations. On the contrary, in the vocabulary of God the 'neighbour' includes the 'enemy', as he was later to illustrate in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, in which a Samaritan did for a Jew what no Jew would have dreamed of doing for a Samaritan. So, Jesus continued, we are to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors. Only then shall we prove ourselves to be authentic children of God, for he gives his good gifts of rain and sunshine to the evil as much as to the righteous. His love is all-embracing, and ours must be too.

In the world outside the Kingdom community people love those who love them. Parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and friends love each other. It is not necessary to be born again to experience that kind of love. 'Even sinners love those who love them' (Lk. 6:32). Reciprocity is the standard of the world. 'You do me a good turn, and I'll do you a good turn; you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours.' But it is not a high enough standard for God's Kingdom. If all we can do is love those who love us, we are no better than pagans. 'What are you doing *more* than others?' Jesus asks (Matt. 5:47). Instead of copying the world, we are to copy God. 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (v. 48).

Now our enemy is the person who is after us with a

knife or a gun, or who is resolved to rob us of something more precious than life itself, namely our good name. Our enemy is one who has mounted a smear campaign of lies and slander against us. How are we to respond to his evil? We are to love him, to seek his welfare, to pray for him, and to do him good at the very time when he is seeking to do us harm. As one commentator has expressed it: To return evil for good is the way of the devil; to return good for good and evil for evil is the way of the world; but the way of Christ is to return good for evil.

Thirdly, Jesus calls us to *nobler ambition*. All human beings are ambitious. Ambition is the desire to succeed in something. The little boy dreams of becoming a pilot or even an astronaut, the little girl of being a hospital nurse or a mother, an adult of becoming rich, powerful or famous. Our ambition is what we 'seek', that is, what we make our goal in life, what we set before ourselves as the supreme good to which we devote our lives. In the end, Jesus said, there are only two alternative goals. We can become preoccupied with food, drink and clothing, that is, with ourselves and our own material comfort. We can keep asking 'what shall I eat?' 'What shall I drink?' 'What shall I wear?' But this is what pagans 'seek'. To be sure, God does not forget our bodily needs. He has given us bodies and told us to pray for our daily bread. But an exclusive preoccupation with ourselves and our bodies is a hopelessly inadequate goal for the disciples of Jesus. Instead, we are to 'seek first God's Kingdom and God's righteousness,' and then our material necessities will be given to us as well (Matt. 6:31-33).

Here then is the summons of Jesus. He calls us to a greater righteousness (of the heart), to a wider love (of our enemies) and to a nobler ambition (God's rule and righteousness in the world). In response, we have need of a double repentance.

First, we must repent of *our compromises*. Jesus sets

before us his way and the way of the world, the narrow path which leads to life and the broad road which leads to destruction. And he obliges us to choose. For 'none can serve two masters' (Matt. 6:24), though many of us have a good shot at it. But, he went on, 'You cannot serve both God and Money'. Nor, for that matter, can we share any other idol with the living God. He demands, because he deserves, our exclusive worship.

So let us turn from our half-heartedness, give up our prudential little compromises, and make Jesus Lord of every part and department of our life.

We lack integrity if we call the world to repent, while not repenting ourselves, if we campaign for social justice, while tolerating injustice in the church, or if we preach the gospel of peace, while acquiescing in discord in the Christian community. Both our evangelism and our social action will be credible only if we ourselves are manifestly new, liberated, righteous and fulfilled human beings.

Secondly, we must repent of *our pessimism*. If evangelical hypocrisy is a horrid thing, so is evangelical pessimism. We say we believe in God. Well, faith and pessimism are mutually incompatible. To be sure, we are not starry-eyed idealists. We cherish no foolish dreams of an earthly utopia. For we know well the fallenness of human beings, and that sin is ingrained in human nature and human society. Nevertheless, we also know the transforming power of the gospel and the purpose of God that his people shall be the world's salt and light. It is this that gives us hope.

So, repenting of both compromise and pessimism, we need to offer ourselves humbly to God, to be his new community in the midst of the old, his salt to hinder social decay, and his light to shine in the darkness and dispel it. There is no better way for Christians to contribute to nation-building.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SENSUS PLENIOR

Julius Muthengi

Since the turn of the century there has been a new interest in biblical interpretation. Within the Roman Catholic Church, exegetes have come up with a new sense of Scripture called **Sensus Plenior.** In other words, the text of Scripture is said to have a fuller sense which was intended by the divine author. According to this view, the human authors were ignorant of the fuller sense or **Sensus Plenior.** It is the work of an exegete to find out what the **Sensus Plenior** of a text is and then pass that knowledge on to others. The preaching and teaching ministries of the Christian Church are affected in one way or another by the issue in question. Therefore, every serious student of the Bible here in Africa and beyond must grapple with this important hermeneutical question of **Sensus Plenior.**

The aim of this paper is to give a critical analysis of **Sensus Plenior.** Of special importance will be to define **Sensus Plenior,** show the relationship of **Sensus Plenior** to the human author, the literal sense, and the criteria upon which the validity of **Sensus Plenior** is argued. Finally, the validity of **Sensus Plenior** will be evaluated and a critique offered which will result in the conclusion of the whole matter.

Definition of Sensus Plenior

As it will be demonstrated in the following pages, one

of the most heated debates in hermeneutics has been the issue of whether Scripture has a fuller sense than that intended by the human author. As early as 1931, H. Simon and J. Prado defined **Sensus Plenior** as that additional meaning which God intended to express in the words of the text, unknown to the human author.[1] However, God does not intend a meaning objectively different from that conveyed by the human author; the difference is subjective or of a development of the human author's idea.[2]

According to Raymond E. Brown, **Sensus Plenior** of a text is a deeper meaning intended by God, but not clearly intended by the human author. In his later work, Brown seems to have given more detail with regard to modifying the earlier definition of **Sensus Plenior** as he writes:

> Let us apply the term sensus plenior to that meaning of his text which by the normal rules of exegesis would not have been within his awareness or intention but which by other criteria we can determine as having been intended by God. . . . We insist that a vague consciousness of this richer meaning may or may not have been present, and that such vague consciousness has no integral place in the definition of the **Sensus Plenior**, either as necessary or as inadmissible.[3]

Brown argues that the deeper/fuller meaning of Scriptures becomes evident when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of Revelation.

A more recent definition of **Sensus Plenior** is given by Donald A. Hagner as is clear in the following:

> To be aware of **Sensus Plenior** is to realize that there is the possibility of more significance to an Old Testament passage than was consciously apparent to the original author, and more than can be gained by strict

> grammatic or historical exegesis. Such is the nature of divine inspiration that the authors of Scripture were themselves often not conscious of the fullest significance and final application of what they wrote. This fuller sense of the Old Testament can be seen only in retrospect and in the light of the New Testament fulfillment.[4]

It seems clear from the foregoing definitions of **Sensus Plenior** that it is a sense other than the literal or natural meaning of the text of Scripture. Having defined what **Sensus Plenior** is, we will now proceed to deal with the discussion of its claimed validity and application in hermeneutics.

Proponents of Sensus Plenior

A close examination of the literature available with regard to **Sensus Plenior** reveals that there are basic questions which need further investigation. Some of the basic issues to be dealt with in this section are: (1) the question of human instrumentality; (2) relation between **Sensus Plenior** and the literal sense of the author; (3) criteria of Sensus **Plenior.**

Sensus Plenior and Human Instrumentality

It seems that even those who hold to **Sensus Plenior** are divided in the matter of whether the human author had awareness of what he wrote or not. Some claim that human authors of Scripture had no consciousness of the **Sensus Plenior.** Others insist that human authors must have had a vague awareness of **Sensus Plenior,** as John O'rourke argues:

> In finding such meaning we are not bound by an overly strict interpretation of what is contained in the logician's definition of the implicit. That the fuller meaning exists there is required nothing more than some very vague knowledge of it on the part of human author.[5]

Some proponents of **Sensus Plenior** further argue that if the human author was not conscious of the **Sensus Plenior**, it cannot be a true sense of Scripture. The reason given for such an assertion is that human instrumentality would be unnecessary.[6] It is argued further that if the **Sensus Plenior** is true, then the human author is reduced to a mere scriber writing under dictation. Challenging the possibility of awareness of **Sensus Plenior** on the part of the human author, Brown writes:

> The language of the Bible is employed to express under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, many things which are beyond the power and scope of the reason. There are in such passages a fullness and a hidden depth of meaning which the letters hardly express and which the laws of interpretation hardly warrant.[7]

Relation Between Sensus Plenior and the Literal Sense

Most proponents of **Sensus Plenior** argue that there is an enormous difference between **Sensus Plenior** and the literal sense. O'rourke, on the other hand, says that there is a fuller sense which is not different from what the human author clearly intends. This fuller meaning is formally implicit in the author's statement.[8]

On the other hand, those who see the difference between **Sensus Plenior** and the literal sense would argue as follows:

> In this connection we can say that the literal sense answers the question about what the text means according to the intention of that author as he was inspired to compose the message at that particular stage in the history of God's drama of salvation.[9]

The Sensus Plenior deals with the question of the

meaning of the text within the context of God's overall plan. This is the meaning which God Himself intended as He is the only one who knew the total picture of His revelation.

Criteria of Sensus Plenior

The basic question to be considered is about the basis on which to determine a **Sensus Plenior**. First it is said by those who hold to the **Sensus Plenior** theory that one of the criteria is that **Sensus Plenior** is based on the development of God's further revelation. A good example is the use of the New Testament in order to unlock the Old Testament. The church fathers as well as church tradition are other keys to unlock the meaning of Scripture.[10]

The second criterion is that a text must be homogeneous with the literal sense. According to those who hold to the view in question, the text must be a development of what the human author wanted to say. Brown points out that it is for the magisterium of the church to determine the fuller sense and pass it on to the faithful.[11] He offers the following summary:

> The fuller sense must be a development of the literal sense. Any distortion or contradiction of the obvious literal sense of the text is not a fuller sense. Besides resemblance of the fuller sense with the obvious literal, it must be ascertained as much as possible that it is a sense of Scripture willed by God to be contained in the literal sense.[12]

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that the issue of **Sensus Plenior** is far from being dead. Although there are a few diversities of opinion within the camp of those who hold to the view in question, it is clear that most of them agree on the basic issue. Such issue is that the interpretation of Scripture

should be based on God's intention rather than that of the human author.

Scholars who hold to Sensus Plenior argue that such sense was there since the composition of the text. They are, however, divided as to whether the human author was aware of the Sensus Plenior or not. Robert Krumholtz profoundly argues:

> God's authorship of the Bible is the action of divine principal cause. Although the first and prevailing action was from God, this divine motion was so clearly united to the proper action of His human instrument that together they were a single principle of one effect - the written word of God. The human author in exercising his faculties acted dispositively to God's action and modified its effects to such an extent that various human authors can be distinguished and recognized in the composition of the different books by reason of their vocabulary, literary style, time and place of his writing.[13]

It should be pointed out that since the view in question seems to be faced with numerous problems, it is important to offer a critique. The following section will be devoted to pointing out some of the crucial objections of Sensus Plenior, its problem areas and contribution to the science of hermeneutics (if any).

Critique of Sensus Plenior

Some scholars point out that the Sensus Plenior does not seem to be different from the literal sense. It is argued that if the fuller sense was implicit in the text of Scripture, how will such a conclusion be different from Origen's allegorism?

One of the objections of Sensus Plenior is that if we accept the view of the so called fuller sense, we are faced with the problem of reducing human authors to mere scribes writing under dictation. Moreover, the

result of this kind of argument will be that the text of Scripture will have two senses, i.e., one intended by God and the other by the human author.[14] On the other hand, the question of inspiration of Scripture will be greatly affected as Bierberg argues:

> Direct or immediate revelations contained in sacred Scripture, therefore, can have no objective **Sensus Plenior**; for they are intended in the fullest sense by their sole author and are quoted as such by the inspired authors.[15]

Another strong argument against the **Sensus Plenior** theory is that if the deeper meaning of the text is recognized on the basis of further revelation, the meaning is not contained in the text itself, but it is acquired at the moment of further revelation. In other words, one should speak of a fuller understanding on the part of the exegete rather than of a fuller sense of the text.[16]

It is argued by exponents of **Sensus Plenior** that the theory is based on eisegesis and not proper exegesis of Scripture. In the case of prophecy, for example I Peter 1:10-12, those who hold to **Sensus Plenior** assert that the prophets were ignorant of what they predicted. To answer such allegations, the passage in question makes clear that the prophets knew what they were talking about. Their ignorance was only with regard to "the time of the fulfillment" of their predictions, but not the meaning of their predictions.[17]

To this end Kaiser convincingly argues:

> This passage does not teach that these men were curious and often ignorant of the exact meaning of what they wrote and predicted. Theirs was not a search for the meaning of what they wrote; it was an inquiry into the temporal aspects of the subject, which went beyond what they wrote. Let it be noted then that the subject is invariably larger than the verbal meaning communicated

> on any subject; nevertheless, one can know adequately and truly even if he does not know comprehensively and totally all the parts of a subject.[18]

Another passage often used as evidence for **Sensus Plenior** is John 11:49-52. It is argued that Caiaphas' prophetic pronouncement regarding Jesus' death is a clear example for the double-author theory of hermeneutics. On the other hand, it should be observed that although Caiaphas uttered a true statement, his perspective was that of political expediency: "It is better to let one man be a sacrificial lamb to save the Jewish cause than to have everyone implicated with Rome's wrath falling on the whole nation."

Attention should be given to the significance of Caiaphas' prediction rather than to the method in which he spoke.[19] It may correctly be asserted that in Caiaphas, we do not have the words of a true prophet coming with authority from God. Instead we see an erring priest giving wicked counsel. However, the significance of Caiaphas' statement accorded with God's sovereign plan, in which the wrath of men and their evil intentions were turned into God's glory.[20]

Thus the passage in question cannot be used to support the **Sensus Plenior** viewpoint. Furthermore, Caiaphas never belonged to the line of apostles and prophets who were the recipients of God's revelation.[21]

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that the theory of **Sensus Plenior** is quite an issue in contemporary biblical interpretation. Although **Sensus Plenior** has had its grips upon Roman Catholic exegetes for decades, it is far from being confined to the Roman Catholic Church. In Protestantism, **Sensus Plenior** is receiving much more attention today than ever before.

One important thing to note is that the majority of

exegetes are willing to accept **Sensus Plenior** as a theory. Even those who are strong proponents of the theory of **Sensus Plenior** are divided in certain matters. Some do recognize the need for the human author's awareness of the fuller sense. Others see no need for such an awareness, since God is the ultimate author of Scripture, while the human author was merely an instrument.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that the problems found in the theory of **Sensus Plenior** suggest that it is only a partial solution to a much wider problem. This should be a great challenge to the evangelicals who are committed to the authority of Scriptures, to give diligence to their study. Of special importance is looking for the author's meaning rather than imposing one's own meaning upon the text.

Notes

1 H. Simon and J. Prado, "Praelectiones Biblicae ad Usum Scholarum" (Vol 1, **Propaedetica Biblica**, Turin: Marietti, 1931) 207-210. For an elaborate discussion see Raymond E. Brown, "The History and Development of the Theory of a **Sensus Plenior**," **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 15 (1953) 143.

2 H. Simon and J. Prado

3 Raymond E. Brown, "The **Sensus Plenior** in the Last Ten Years," **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 25 (1963) 268-269.

4 Donald A. Hagner, "The Old Testament in the New Testament," in **Interpreting the Word of God**, Ed. by Samuel Schultz and Morris Inch, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976) 92. Quoted from Henry A. Virkler, **Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation**, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981) 25-26.

5 John J. O'rourke, "Marginal Notes on the **Sensus Plenior**," **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 21 (1959) 64.

6 Brown, p. 265.

7 Raymond E. Brown, "The Decision of the Biblical Commission," **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 17 (1955) 455.

8 O'rourke, p. 64.

9 G. N. Bergado, "The **Sensus Plenior** as a New Testament Hermeneutical Principle," Master's Thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1969) 22.

10 R. Bierbers, "Hermeneutics",**Jerome Biblical Commentary**, Ed. by Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 616.

11 Bergado, p. 27.

12 Bergado, p. 27.

13 Robert H. Krumholtz, "Instrumentality and the Sensus Plen-

ior," **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 20 (1958) 200-205.

14 O'rourke, **Marginal Notes** p. 65.

15 Rudold Bierberg, "Does Sacred Scripture Have a **Sensus Plenior**?" **Catholic Biblical Quarterly** 10 (1948) 191.

16 Bierberg, "Hermeneutics", p. 617.

17 Virkler, **Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation**, p. 26

18 Walter C. Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in **Evangelical Roots**, Ed. by Kenneth S. Kantzer, (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978) 126.

19 Kaiser, p. 130.

20 Kaiser, p. 131.

21 Kaiser, p. 131.

Book Reviews

Theological Education in Context
100 Extension Programmes in Contemporary Africa
By Jonathan Hogarth, Kiranga Gatimu and David Barrett
(Uzima Press: Nairobi, Kenya, 1983) pages 189, Ksh 50/

In response to the crisis situation in leadership training the African church may well be deploying the world's most effective TEE network. In 1980 23,900 students were enrolled in TEE in Africa with 1289 national and 212 expatriate teachers. This book is the first attempt to systematically explain and document this exciting contemporary movement in the African church.

The authors state in their introduction that the original inspiration for this book came from the East African Consultation on Theological Education by Extension held at Limuru, Kenya in December, 1979. There it was felt that systematic research into the TEE movement within the churches would be of crucial value at this stage of the movement's development.

The authors' objectives in this work are (1) to meet the need for an authoritative examination and evaluation of TEE in the Africa-wide church and (2) to help church leaders to think about TEE on the basis of the facts of the current situation.

The discussion of contextualization in chapter 5 is interesting. The authors examine three TEE courses used in Africa in an attempt to evaluate them on the basis of contextualization. In their conclusion the authors state: "The three courses illustrated above are attempts at contextualization of teaching materials going on in Africa today. They illustrate important factors in contextualization such as attention to the culture and context of the students and the use of forms and adaptations designed to facilitate practical expression of the theological truths in life and ministry. Whilst not claiming too much on the basis of these beginnings, it may still be rightly said that the extension

method itself has brought to life a creative flexibility and practical orientation to the teaching of theology and the Bible that has often eluded the Christian church" (p. 73).

The final chapter of the book is particularly provocative. After stating that TEE has been welcomed in the African church they say, "But this initial warmth of reception will have to lead on to much greater involvement at every level of TEE by local people everywhere and to a far greater ability to truly contextualize materials and ministries before maturity can be claimed for the movement as such" (p. 147).

The authors call for the involvement of all theologians and teachers in Africa in the preparation of materials for self-study at all levels of instruction. They note that there is very little coordination of standards and requirements in TEE, and this has led to a lack of acceptance of the programme.

The authors summarize the achievements of TEE regarding ministerial formation as follows:

> Firstly, it has been used to train full-time clergy within the churches. It has also been used to train supplementary or tent-making clergy. The tasks have been carried out sometimes in cooperation with a residential training programme, but not often. Secondly, and most commonly, TEE has been used to train the multitude of lay evangelists upon whom the African church depends for its ongoing ministry. This has been its most significant contribution to date. Thirdly, many programmes have made basic Bible teaching available to thousands of lay Christians by the extension method. These persons would not otherwise have studied their faith systematically if at all. Here also a big contribution, and a new one, has been made (pp. 149, 150).

The appendices include valuable information on TEE programmes in Africa and a good bibliography of TEE books. With the possible exception of chapter 4, which is a restatement of the basic elements of TEE, this book makes an original and essential contribution to TEE literature.

In their closing remarks the authors state: "Perhaps the day is coming soon when church leaders in Africa will recognize the immense force for good that TEE represents. Perhaps then adequate resources will be made available for this most vital of Christ's ministries in the modern world" (p. 162). We can only echo AMEN.

Dick Dunkerton
National TEE Coordinator, AIC Kenya

People in Rural Development
By Peter Batchelor
(Paternoster Press: U.K.) 54 pages, Ksh 95/

People in Rural Development is a good starter book for those interested in being involved in rural development in Africa. Its strength is not as a technical textbook but in focusing on the moral issues related to approaching development projects and then some practical applications of that approach.

Mr. Batchelor understands that the basic fabric in African life is relationships. This interpersonal commitment is what gives strength to the extended family and rural village. Anyone entering into rural development must make a commitment to the people involved via their physical presence and building of friendships. In time these relationships give insight and direction to programmes designed through the partnership of the development worker and those he's come to serve.

Thirty years as an agriculturalist in Africa has brought Mr. Batchelor through the "expert" stage (which he undoubtedly is) to that of an intelligent servant to the African Church. This is no easy accomplishment for those filled with knowledge coupled with divine mission. For many Westerners (Christian and non-Christian) results and production are synonymous with success. The laying aside of preconceived solutions in order to establish relationships plus discover real, felt and perceived needs of people from which a project can be planned is not the normal game

plan used in many "development" projects across the African continent. People, by their very nature, are complex and their social fibre reflects that complexity. It is for the person involved with development to take the time to discover the existing systems and balances within a given community and to build on them, not replace them. The discovery Mr. Batchelor shares is that development takes time, time to plan with people, time to educate, time to execute. "Development" that is forced to take place to meet schedules other than for the people for whom the development was meant raises moral and ethical issues for which Mr. Batchelor's voice is raised in protest.

In **People in Rural Development** the Christian development worker must be willing to stand as both a bridge and a wall between those he means to help and those who are providing funding. This person, or persons, must be willing to invest time and energy to the establishment of relationships on both sides (rural development and funding agency). From trust-bond relationships real, felt and perceived needs will be discovered and tested, and, according to Mr. Batchelor, a project(s) will emerge blending both the technical knowledge of the rural development worker and the ageless wisdom of the African villager. Examples of how this works are given in the book, but it still remains for the reader to make application by his own investment in time and people.

A biblical principle of "coming-alongside" people, not just giving them verbal encouragement in problem solving, is thoroughly advocated by Mr. Batchelor. It is significant that in Mr. Batchelor's own ideas on development he physically moved out of the classroom (a mostly verbal situation) into living and working with the villagers (a "coming-alongside" situation). Knowledge gained must be transferred to the fields and married with the wisdom of centuries of village life. It is the combination of both types of knowledge from which real progress and development take place.

Government may make laws. Scientists may make studies. Missionaries and church leaders may preach. But, if no one takes the time and energy to live with the people, and have patience to listen and learn, no change in the present situation in Africa will take place. People are the key not the programme.

Mr. Batchelor states that new life in Christ is the bottom line from which real development takes root and grows. It is the task of the Christian Rural Development worker to move alongside his neighbor because he loves him and wants to see burdens lifted whether it be sin or poor quality of life.

What Mr. Batchelor accomplishes via **People in Rural Development** is to give us an ethical and moral position in development. Human beings can be easily lost, or second place, to "the project" if the development worker is not careful. I believe Mr. Batchelor's message goes beyond the rural village of Africa and aims at the heart of what good communication is wherever people are concerned with helping others, whether rural or urban, African or on another continent.

Howard Berry, Africa Director,
World Concern, Nairobi

Review of Philippians
Word Biblical Commentary
By Gerald F. Hawthorne
(Word Books, Waco, Texas) 232 pages, $18.95

The Word Biblical Commentary promises to be a very significant new series covering the whole Bible from a broad based evangelical position. The editorial board intends to maintain a high standard of excellence, seeking 'to make the technical and scholarly approach to a theological understanding of Scripture understandable by - and useful to - the fledgling student, the working minister as well as to colleagues in the guild of professional scholars and teachers'.

The body of the commentary is laid out clearly in sections dealing with bibliography, the author's own translation, text critical notes, a review of modern scholarship (dealing with the form, structure and setting, as appropriate), a detailed exposition and a concluding explanation showing the section's relevance. The editorial preface says that 'there is something for

everyone who may pick up and use these volumes'. These are very broad objectives that will not be easy to meet and maintain effectively. Nevertheless, if this volume is representative, the series will be most valuable.

The first impression is of unusually comprehensive bibliographies, e.g. 12 pages of abbreviations and 4 pages on Phil. 2:5-11. This is ideal for advanced work, though of limited use in Africa.

The introductory material is surprisingly short; for this reason I expected it to be inadequate. But though it is written concisely, the important material is there. Pauline authorship is affirmed. The arguments of those who see Philippians as a composite letter are rejected as inadequate and unconvincing, particularly as 'the same terms, word-roots and motifs pervade all of its so-called separate parts'. The section about Philippi and the church was good though it lacked information about the religious situation of the city. After reviewing the claims of Rome, Ephesus, Corinth and Caesarea as the place of writing, and concluding in a paraphrase of Origen that "Only God knows where Philippians was written," Hawthorne finally decides for Caesarea. He claims that this seems best for the understanding of the letter, though he does not give his reasons for this decision nor does it significantly affect the exegesis of the text.

Two groups are identified who were causing problems. First, those who were opposing Paul. He thinks it is not possible to be certain whether these are Christian missionaries with a divine-man theology or Christian Judaizers. This he sees of lesser importance since Paul was more concerned about the second group, the false teachers who were undermining the faith of the church; these were most likely Jewish missionaries. He disagrees with those who see Gnostics as a third group in ch. 3:12-16, arguing that throughout ch. 3 Paul is dealing with a single opponent, the Jews.

Why did Paul write this letter? The many reasons given centre around his deep affection for them including his thanks for their gift, and his concern to strengthen their faith and to warn them against false teaching.

The introduction concludes with three sections: One giving an outline; the second stressing the centrality of Christ throughout the letter; and the last briefly reviewing the manuscript evidence, pointing out that the text has no major difficulties.

One of the strengths of the commentary is that it is based on the Greek text, as is required by the series. The Greek is almost always translated so that it can be used by those without Greek; only occasionally would this be hard to follow.

Some of the most rewarding work is in the 'Form/Structure/Setting' sections. These deal with the basic point of each part of the letter, its relevance to epistolary style, and its setting in the letter, particularly with what it follows. His demonstration of the inner coherence of the letter will amply repay study.

What are some of the highlights of the commentary?

He points out how Paul in His Salutation (ch. 1:1-2) subtly sets the tone for his letter. He links his name with Timothy. He uses the word 'slaves' so showing the importance of devoted service. He includes all of the church in his greeting so emphasising their unity. By giving a double title to the leaders he is able to remind them that authority means responsibility, that leaders are to serve the church rather than disagree about their own importance.

A number of times he draws attention to the chiastic structure and balanced phrases that are so characteristic of Paul's writing. While recognising the hymnic form of ch. 2:6-11 he makes no attempt to analyse it into strophes; arguing that since there is no agreement amongst scholars, it is unlikely that we can know for certain what its original form was like. What is more interesting is the tracing of parallels between this passage and John 13:3-17, particularly the parallels in thought and in the progression of action. Ch. 3:20-21 is seen as another Christological hymn. Although scholars are divided about this, it is the number of parallels that there are with the earlier hymn that are so striking.

We are shown how Paul first exhorts the Philippians to model

their lives on the way Christ lived, then uses Timothy and later Epaphroditus as examples to illustrate what he is saying.

The comments on specific words are helpful and often illuminating. 'Prayer' - concerns a real need that only God can meet, p. 17. 'Form' - the essential nature and character of God, p. 84. 'Stretching out' - the need for concentration and effort in the Christian life, p. 153. 'Noble' (NIV) - majestic, p. 188. 'Content' or 'satisfied' - a spirit free from worry, untroubled through dependence upon God, p. 198-9.

The comments are good and well reasoned. He raises the questions that need to be asked, dealing with them in a way that is most stimulating, and leading to a better understanding of the text. At times there is some imbalance in that number of times he champions the view of a minority of scholars. When he does this the discussion is noticeably more lengthy and detailed. Even so, he does not always establish his case convincingly, nor adequately disprove the other view.

The proof reading was excellent with few mistakes. The most startling one was 'anakainoteron' (more renewed) for 'anagkaioteron' on p. 48; in effect a transposition of the letter 'n'. There is an 'n' for a 'u' in 'heauton' in the middle of p. 86, an easy enough error to make in Greek. The superscript 'f' is missing from the translation on p. 129, it would follow the word 'as' in the last sentence of v. 8. The first of the two references to Codex Sinaiticus in note 'a' p. 168 is a mistake.

All in all a distinguished commentary with an evangelical stance that is without question, the author succeeds well in his intention to express clearly the meaning of Paul's letter. It is highly recommended to any pastor or teacher who wants to preach from or to study the riches of Philippians. Unfortunately its price puts it out of the reach of many African pastors and students. This means that it will be an important addition to Bible College libraries.

Colin Densham
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The Theological Task of the Church in Africa
Tite Tienou
(Africa Christian Press: Achimota) 54 pages, Ksh 15

Tite Tienou delivered the substance of this little book as the "1978 Byang H. Kato Memorial Lectures" at ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Nigeria. As executive secretary of the Theological Commission of AEAM, Tienou is entirely competent to handle this important topic of the theological task of the church in Africa. In the first chapter, the need for an African evangelical theological strategy is argued. To some this need is self-evident enough. Unfortunately there are still a few godly and influential church leaders of the older generation who regard any theological development with grave suspicion. After all, they themselves seem to have led well without much theological preparation. In response, Tienou warns that "those who reject theology are building their house on sand. . . ." He compares evangelical theology to a mariners' reliable map by which we can steer our way past many rocks and arrive at the sure knowledge of God. The humble beginnings of the present strategy for evangelical theology for Africa are traced to significant steps taken at the second General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) in 1973. This is an important piece of historical information for evangelicals in Africa.

In the second chapter, some of the main issues in the theological task in Africa are indicated. Four of these issues are considered in some detail, namely: Christianity and African culture, Christianity and African religion, African theology and contextualization. In the past many of these issues have proved controversial for evangelicals in Africa. This is partly because those African theologians who initiated the discussion of these important issues would not whole-heartedly confess the evangelical faith. Now, thanks be to God, there is a growing corps of competent evangelical theologians in Africa who should address themselves to these crucial matters. Both the author and this reviewer were among the delegates from Africa at the Third World Theologians Consultation held in Seoul, Korea, August/Sept 1982.

Every region worked out a theological agenda of the important issues to be studied as a matter of urgency before the next session of the consultation, to be held in Africa. The agenda for Africa, summarized in "The Seoul Declaration toward an Evangelical Theology for the Third World" is as follows:

> Those of us in Africa will have to take seriously the traditional African world view, the reality of the spirit world, the competing ideologies, the resurgence of Islam and the contemporary cultural, religious and political struggles. Theology will have to explore ways of presenting the personal God and Jesus Christ as the only mediator between God and man. Also, it will seek to respond to the quest of human identity in the context of the dehumanizing history of colonial exploitation, tribal feuds and racial discrimination.

I have made this lengthy reference to the Third World Theologians Consultation to show that our emerging evangelical theologians sense their God-given responsibility to serve the church in Africa by seeking biblical answers to the crucial issues facing it. Moreover, the advantages of treading the theological minefield together are manifold: mutual admonition, encouragement, prayer and the sharing of insights. Tienou warns, in the third chapter, that if the African church fails to work out adequate biblical and theological answers to the issues outlined above, it will be forced to retreat into a mistrust of theology, sacerdotalism, an ahistorical faith, and denominational individualism. May God forbid that, faced with the exciting prospect of permeating non-Christian African society with the Good News of God's grace in this day of opportunity, the church should retreat into defensive ghettos and thus become irrelevant.

The concluding chapter, entitled "Towards an Evangelical Theological Strategy," breathes a note of quiet confidence and trust in God and the power of His word. It advocates a positive theology, worked out in humble dependence upon God in prayer, and in cooperation with the entire evangelical community in Africa. Tienou envisions a strategy that enables evangelical theology to develop and mature in our graduate schools, permeate the departments of religion in African universities, benefit pastors and lay people in theological education by extension programmes, and serve the

growing number of independent churches as well. The respective roles that existing AEAM institutions could play in this exciting development are outlined in conclusion. Tienou has made a very useful contribution to the ongoing discussion. Theological students throughout Africa will want to read this book carefully, and let it stir them to thought and prayer.

Gottfried Osei-Mensah
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International Congress on World Evangelization

An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament
By Derek Tidball
(Paternoster Press 160pp) £4.20

The social sciences, and sociology in particular, are often regarded with caution, even suspicion, by evangelical Christians. This mistrust seems to stem largely from a misunderstanding of the nature of sociological thinking and enquiry, a misunderstanding arising in part from the appropriation (and sometimes misuse) of sociological concepts and terminology by devotees of political viewpoints with which Christians may disagree. But it is easy to throw out the baby with the bath water. Not all sociologists base their enquiry on a solely materialistic conception of the world, and the discipline can provide many insights which deepen our understanding of the complex human world through which God has chosen to operate.

It is most refreshing, therefore, to discover a newly-published work which explicitly sets out to apply sociological techniques to the social system revealed in the pages of the New Testament, from an author who is 'committed to a conservative view of the New Testament' (p. 9). Historical sociology often has to face problems of incomplete information, and sources of varying reliability. Derek Tidball does not claim that the New Testament documents represent a sociological treatise, but he has used them as the basis of 'a sociological perspective, not naively, but on

the assumption that what they claim about themselves is true' (p. 19). His aim, then, is to provide a sociological analysis of the phenomena of the 'Jesus Movement', rather than answer the problem of the relationship, still unresolved, between theology and sociology. This relationship is the subject of a brief discussion in the opening chapter, and arises again in the final one with the consideration of the sociology of knowledge. The problem here is the extent to which knowledge has any objective reality, or is, alternatively, a social product. This applies to all aspects of social culture, which confronts the newborn human being through agents such as parents, friends and teachers: 'society [is] a real phenomenon. It is objective, given and seems to be factually there. . . . This social world is so real because it is internalised in the person's thinking' (p. 138). How 'real' is the world/truth/experience, etc., is particularly relevant, then, to religion, since religious interpretations of reality attempt to deal with ultimate questions and answers. These important issues are handled in a brief but illuminating account, as a background to the book's more central concerns.

This approach is in keeping with the author's intention that this 'Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament' should be appropriate to the general reader with no prior knowledge of sociology. In particular it will be useful for Bible School students whose New Testament studies have given them some expertise in this area. Dr. Tidball's own position as lecturer and Director of Studies at London Bible College has afforded plenty of experience in the teaching of sociology to Bible students. The result is a first-rate examination of New Testament life and teaching in the light of a sociological perspective.

The early chapters of the work consider the nature of the 'Jesus Movement' and its growth in the early church. Here Dr. Tidball largely presents and compares the arguments of other scholars whose work, he feels, deserves to reach a wider audience than the readers of obscure journals. In particular he presents Kee's and Gager's characterization of the 'Jesus Movement' as a millenarian movement (which incidentally has no connection with the theological idea of a millennium). Millenarian movements, though varying widely in many respects, are characterised by the promise of radical changes in an unjust society, a new earth populated by

new men and women, and tend to be dynamically led and followed. This is compared with the alternative position advocated by Judge, that the early Christians were more a kin to a scholastic community. Then follows a consideration of Thiessen's analysis of the structure and growth of the early church. The discussion of the early church in Jerusalem (chapter 5) covers a variety of interesting issues, in particular the different types of authority which can be identified in the early church, and possible sociological insights into its missionary zeal.

From this point Dr. Tidball's discussion expands its range to consider the social environment in which the early church operated and to which it preached. He makes the point that the style and language of preaching and teaching varied according to the hearers (an early example of contextualization?). In some depth he considers the three major social groupings of the Graeco-Roman world: the city community, the household, and the voluntary association, and the way in which each has a part to play in fulfilling man's need to belong. The early church also functioned at each of these levels, and there are interesting and helpful parallels with our own social and church structures today.

The modern church is often criticised for being a middle class movement making little impact on other social groups. This appears to be in sharp contrast to the origins and social status of the early believers, who are often characterized as of humble origins and status. Dr. Tidball demonstrates, however, that the membership of the early church was very mixed, attracting adherents from a diversity of backgrounds. Chapter 8 offers a particularly interesting and challenging discussion on the relationship between the early church and the outside world, and especially its stand on ethical and political issues such as slavery, wealth and the state. The author concludes that the lack of specific New Testament judgement on many social and political issues does not imply their insignificance for the believer, nor absolve him from participation in them.

This book is about the New Testament rather than about sociology. That is, it employs sociological perspectives to analyze New Testament society. It gives comparatively little explanation or

criticism of the sociological concepts used, with the result that non-sociologists (for whom the book is intended) could get the impression that these categories (such as, for example, social class, or types of authority) are given and unproblematic, rather than the subject of much continuing debate. It is uncertain whether this simplified approach will serve to clarify or confuse in the longer run.

But this 'Introduction' admirably accomplishes its aim, for which it can be most warmly recommended. What is more, it achieves it in 150 pages. Much of the book considers the work of other New Testament scholars and Dr. Tidball does not claim to be making an original contribution. But this disclaimer underestimates the high quality of the discussion presented, its clear approach, and in particular its consistent and comprehensive reference to Scripture. This will make it an invaluable source book for Bible students and general-interest readers alike. It is to be hoped that this excellent 'Introduction' represents the beginning of a more fruitful relationship between sociology and biblical research.

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Never Turn Back
by R. E. Harlow

Never Turn Back, a brief, practical, devotional commentary on the Book of Hebrews, effectively relates the key thrust of the writer of Hebrews, namely the urging of the readers to reject the temptation to return to Judaism and to persevere in their walk with Christ, who is far superior to anything and everything contained in the Old Covenant.

The author states that the authorities sought to turn the Hebrew Christians back to Judaism by two methods. They made the temple services as attractive as possible, and they persecuted the Christians who declined to go back. According to the author,

Satan uses these same two methods today to attempt to cause Christians to deny Christ and the faith and return to their former and "easier" way of life.

In expounding the message of the Book of Hebrews, the author of **Never Turn Back** portrays Christ as: 1. A Greater Prophet; 2. A Greater Messenger; 3. A Greater Servant. He continues to depict the advantages Christians have under the New Covenant under the topics: A Better Rest, A Better Priesthood, A Better Covenant, and A Better Sacrifice. The conclusion is that Hebrew Christians had every desired advantage under Christ and the New Covenant and thus should "Never Turn Back" to the inferior religion as established under the Old Covenant.

One problem encountered in the review of **Never Turn Back** is the opinion that the author resorts to observations which seem to go beyond what the text warrants. He may be dealing with possible applications of what the text is saying, but certainly should not be stated as dogmatic truth. An example would be found in his comments on Hebrews 10:25: "Some of the Hebrews were thinking about the world around them and stopped coming to the meetings. They did not want the other Christians to keep telling them what was wrong in their lives." Such may actually have been the case, but does the text itself warrant such dogmatic conclusions?

Another problem is the author's use of the word translated "share" in Hebrews 6:4. He states that "share" does not mean to accept fully. He takes the position in the difficult Hebrews 6:4-8 passage that the professing believers referred to were never truly born again. But, if it is agreed that the word translated "share" in Hebrews 6:4 does not mean to accept fully, then it would follow that the "holy brethren" in Hebrews 3:1 are not fully accepted partakers of the heavenly calling, that the "we" of Hebrews 3:14 do not truly share in Christ and that the ones disciplined in Hebrews 12:8 were not fully accepted sons, as the same Greek word is used in all four of these passages.

In reference to authorship of the book of Hebrews, R. E. Harlow is rather non-committal, referring only to Paul as a possible author.

Never Turn Back would serve as a useful commentary or **Bible** study guide for individual Christians who are rather young in the faith or who have not yet acquired the desire or ability to feed on the strong meat of the Word. This opinion is offered since the book deals largely with simplistic explanations of the passages in Hebrews and tends to be a "running commentary" rather than a systematic and more scholarly treatment. The author frequently gives only one explanation of some of the more difficult passages in Hebrews which may have different possible interpretations and which scholars have struggled with for years. This one, rather simple, explanation of such passages may be either a strength or a weakness depending on the perspective of the reader(s). In summary, those who like a practical, devotional, simple commentary would profit more from **Never Turn Back** than those who are looking for exegetical or expository treatment of the text.

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Building a Ugandan Church
African Participation in Church Growth and Expansion in Busoga 1891 - 1940
By A. D. Tom Tuma
(Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, 1980) 232 pages, Kshs. 60/

Students of African Church History should be indebted to A.D. Tom Tuma for his book, **Building a Ugandan Church,** for several reasons. First, he took the time to rewrite his Ph.D dissertation which he had presented to the University of London, so that we could have a very readable history of church in Busoga. (All too often good church history research is not widely circulated because it was not written for the general public.) Second, Mr. Tuma did some very important original research among some of the earliest Busoga church leaders. We can be thankful that the author did his research among his oral informants when he did, as at least eight of the oldest men and women have since died. Third, he has provided new insight into the people actually

responsible for the bulk of early evangelism and church planting in eastern Uganda.

The author states his thesis in the Preface:

> One of the important but often neglected fields of study in African Church History is the contribution of the African people to Church growth in their areas. This study . . . attempts to explore this new area with the purpose of unravelling and establishing the contribution of the Busoga Church Leaders to the growth and expansion of the Church in Busoga between 1891 and 1940, (p. vii).

I feel Mr. Tuma did an excellent job of achieving his goal. As already mentioned, he went to Busoga and did quite a bit of original research with oral informants. The text also reflects very detailed research of government and church libraries and archives in both Uganda and Britain. Interviews and references are documented with extensive footnotes. At the end of the book are twenty-three pages of archival sources, missionary publications, government publications and a bibliography of books, pamphlets and articles.

This extensive research brought to light some very interesting things about the establishment and growth of the Church in Busoga. One point that caught my attention was the major role played by African missionaries in the evangelization of eastern Uganda. The author showed how the early Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries brought Baganda catechists or missionaries with them to Busoga when beginning the work. Many of the Baganda missionaries devoted their entire life to building up the Busoga Church. Within twenty years of the Baganda missionaries arrival in Busoga, the CMS was able to mobilize thirty Basoga missionaries to go to the next tribe, the Bakedi. Mr. Tuma aptly portrays the major role of African cross-cultural communicators of the gospel message in the early development of the Ugandan Church, and attributes much of the phenomenal growth of the Church to their ministry.

Building a Ugandan Church begins with a chapter of political and geographical background information before moving to the arrival

devoted to a review of the missionaries' method of evangelism and the reactions of the Basoga. A large part of the book is devoted to the development of African clergy and church workers, referred to as the "Busoga Professionals," and their influence in shaping a Busoga Church. The book concludes with the rise of church independency and the influence of the Ruanda Revival Movement on the established Church.

On the whole the book is quite well written. In places the reader will find Mr. Tuma's bias, as a Musoga, colored a bit of the narrative, but this is not a major problem. A little more surprising is the fact that as a historian, Mr. Tuma sometimes missed the influence of politics and nationalism on early denominational relationships. After describing the rivalry between the early Protestant missionaries (whom he describes with the Lusoga term Bangereza - English) and the Catholics (Bafalansa - French) he writes:

> The arrival of the MHM (Mill Hill Mission) does not seem to have caused undue excitement among the CMS missionaries in Busoga. In fact there were signs of co-operation and friendship between the CMS and MHM European missionaries at Bukaleba. . . . This does not mean that competition and rivalry had ceased, but it indicates a lack of the bitterness and enmity which had characterised the Protestant-Catholic relationship in Buganda" (p. 38).

The author might have noted that since MHM was a British Catholic order, CMS missionaries would not have seen them as a threat to British imperial ambitions in East Africa, as the French Catholics had been.

Tom Tuma's book challenges students of African Church History to dig deeper than the easily available histories of the missionary movement, to discover the largely unheralded contribution of African catechists, pastors, teachers and missionaries to church growth in Africa.

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