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# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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## HEAD AND HEART

### An AJET Editorial

In the second of his 2008 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures at the ECWA Theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria, *Christian Intellectual Responsibilities in Modern Africa*, Paul Bowers alerts evangelicals to the need for “a responsible theological engagement with our African *intellectual context*.” Bowers is not complaining about the kind of intellectual activity that produced the Africa Bible Commentary and the series of individual Biblical commentaries beginning to flow out of it. Rather he contends that we should be responding also to the wider intellectual activity in Africa. How many AJET or ABC readers have also read Thandika Mkandawire, ed., *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*, (Dakar: CODESRIA Books, 2005)? Many of us are familiar with the need to address the remnants of the traditional African worldviews that sometimes drive otherwise faithful Christians to seek the older spiritual powers in times of crisis. But Bowers points out that “across the continent one can readily find highly educated African Christians functioning in the professional and academic worlds of modern Africa who often live dichotomized intellectual and spiritual lives, devoted to Christ in their personal life and witness, but functioning by alternative more secular interpretive commitments in their public professional life.” Can Christian universities produce leaders who can help these believers deal with modern Africa as it is as well as helping others who retain some traditional ways of thinking?

Not everyone is equipped, called or otherwise personally motivated to tackle this larger academic discourse. But if we are, then we would do well to also heed the main thrust of our second article, David Tarus’ “*The Significance of Intellectual Humility for Theologians Today*”. This article is more concerned about our attitudes than our achievements. Intellectual pride has led more than one well-educated evangelical to rely too heavily on his reason and too little on the faith that was delivered once for all to the saints. The risk of catching the disease of intellectual pride need not increase in proportion to the number of degrees we earn.

Our third article started as an address to the *Theological Education in Africa Conference* held in June 2008 in Jos, Nigeria. Danny McCain, a professor at the University of Jos, takes us *Beyond the Centre: A Focus on Some Broader Issues in Theological Education*. After carefully pointing out that the core foci of a theological institution is to provide its students with

instruction in Bible and theology, training in ministry, and spiritual formation, McCain goes beyond these to challenge us to *professionalism*: in our teaching methodology, in research and writing (Hear! Hear! and Amen!), in administrative techniques, and in continued learning. He next focuses on *integrity* in everything from finances to the use of academic titles. The latter section ties in nicely with Tarus' point about academic pride. McCain's third challenge, *image*, collects together the issues of campus beautification, appropriate professional dress, and the institution's affiliation with a university or its accreditation with an organization like ACTEA. Before ending with a challenge for theological institutions to practice *cooperation* by sharing resources and personnel with one another and other groups, McCain focuses on the challenge of *relevance*. This challenge dovetail's neatly with Bower's challenge to engage modern Africa's intellectual context. A number of the issues that McCain lists as necessary to help our students to minister effectively in today's Africa also can be found among those addressed by Africa's intellectual elites: HIV/AIDS, corruption, governance, violence, pornography, secularism, and the environment. One good resource from an evangelical perspective that addresses many of these relevant issues is Wilbur O'Donovan's *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*, first published in 2000 by Paternoster Press, and recently re-published by the author through Kijabe Press in Kenya. For those close enough, it can be obtained at the ACTS Bookshop at NEGST in Karen, Kenya.

One issue that arouses very strong passionate responses in both Christian and non-Christian circles is abortion. This is tackled in our fourth article, Emeka C. Ekeke's *Abortion Technology in the Twenty-First Century: A Christian Bioethical Appraisal*. Amongst the negative effects of globalization is the transfer of modern abortion technology and, too often, the attitudes that make its use legal. Ekeke not only informs us about the current technologies used in the USA and their affects on the unborn, their mothers, and society, he passionately defends the right to life of the unborn on Biblical, scientific, and ethical grounds. This article leaves you in no doubt about the ethical stance of the writer. We hope that the article provides African Christians with the information they need to stand firm on an issue that has, so far, defeated "right to life" Christians in most Western countries.

# Christian Intellectual Responsibilities in Modern Africa

*2008 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures 2*

Jos, Nigeria, March 2008

Paul Bowers<sup>1</sup>

## AN INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

In honouring the memory of Byang Kato through these lectures, one particular characteristic of the man that is worthy of special notice was his intention both to speak for and to live out, within his African context, the biblical summons to a *discipleship of the mind*. Kato was committed to a faith that has become mature and effective not least because it is intellectually engaged within its context. One consequence of this commitment was that Kato was, among other things, the first African evangelical to attempt to engage the theological issues of modern Africa's intellectual life. I wish to suggest that Kato's example in this respect constitutes a challenge in our day, especially to those of us engaged in theological education in Africa, a challenge that has yet to be fully addressed.

The African evangelical community, at least at its more popular levels, may not always be especially oriented to the *intellectual* responsibilities of true Christian discipleship. It is more a worthy exemplar of witness and

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celebration, of vitality and social engagement. But those of us who find ourselves invested in the strategic ministry of quality theological education in Africa do also care about responsibilities of the mind.

Kato's challenge, however, was not only for responsible theological life, important as that is. His challenge was also for a responsible theological engagement with our African *intellectual context*. On that particular point we have not done so well. Indeed it might be said that generally speaking we who serve in the evangelical theological colleges of Africa are scarcely aware of the higher levels of African intellectual life today, its patterns, its inner fixations, its scope. This is largely unknown territory for contemporary African evangelical reflection. We will not find articles in our theological journals, nor courses in our graduate schools, nor discourse at our academic conferences, nor texts from our leading publishers on this topic. And this is so despite the considerable role that this dimension of African life plays on the continent, and despite the range of academic literature already devoted to it. We have been focused on other important matters.

In African evangelical reflection we have been much engaged, and to good purpose, in the discourse of *cultural contextualisation* and its theological implications. But here I am pointing to a different discourse. Whereas the evangelical communities of Europe and North America devote unremitting attention to the intellectual trends of their contexts, and to the challenges that these trends represent for them, no such comparable critical attention exists within our African evangelical community to the *intellectual* trends of our own particular context.

In Africa we as evangelical believers do not face what fellow believers in the west face in terms of intellectual challenges; we do not face a rampant individualism, affluence on a scale that is corrupting, an ascendant post-modernity, an aggressive secularism. These are the necessary intellectual preoccupations of western Christians who seek to be faithful to God's truth in their context. On the African continent we face other basic intellectual drives, other habits of the mind that have controlled the continent's intellectual life, that have in fact become instinctive and unassailable for a century and more, perceptions that will also play a major role in determining Africa's future in this coming century, for better or worse. In terms of intellectual life, Africa actually has its own thing going. At all levels our context is affected by African intellectual modernity, and we ourselves are affected as well. And yet as evangelicals we have hardly begun to tune in to its distinctive contours. We need to do our homework; we must not expect others to do it for us.

The evangelical community in Africa has certainly been intellectually active. The *Africa Bible Commentary* is an extraordinary achievement. The *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* is into its 27th year of publication. Our dominant theological discourse on contextualisation, on the interface between Christianity and traditional African culture, represents a laudably vibrant and fruitful intellectual life in our midst. But modern Africa's intellectual life has remained a largely uncharted territory for us, in contrast to the secular academic world where it is an organised field of inquiry. The sorts of resources that I have in mind would include such recent publications as those by Toyin Falola of Nigeria, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (2003); Paul Zeleza of Zimbabwe, *Rethinking Africa's Globalization: The Intellectual Challenges* (2003); and Messay Kebede of Ethiopia, *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization* (2004). This is a field of academic exploration extending back to such earlier classics as those by Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (1967), and Claude Wauthier, *The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa* (1966). I am suggesting that this crucial component of our African context we do not know, and have yet to engage with effectively.

One consequence of this lack of engagement with the thought world of modern Africa is that the African university communities and the educated elite of Africa are often barely addressed by biblical truth in its full richness and depth and relevance for the life of the mind. And across the continent one can readily find highly educated African Christians functioning in the professional and academic worlds of modern Africa who often live dichotomized intellectual and spiritual lives, devoted to Christ in their personal life and witness, but functioning by alternative more secular interpretive commitments in their public professional life.

In such a situation one can but welcome the recent emergence of Christian universities in different parts of the continent. The potential that these new centres of learning represent is indeed heartening. Whether they will begin effectively to address this intellectual need is yet to be seen. Will their Christian character be evidenced mostly only by Christian ownership and by Christian staffing, or will they also become centres of vibrant, integrated Christian thinking, where the Christian worldview becomes closely engaged with African intellectual modernity across all disciplines?

We can thank God for the Lesslie Newbigin, the John Stott or the Ravi Zacharias, who at different periods and in their various ways have aided God's people in the west in discerning how best to maintain a biblical mindset and

godly witness amidst the often enticing and deceptive intellectual cross-currents of their modern world. But here we live in modern Africa, amidst ideological trends, assumptions and commitments that directly shape the life of the continent, amidst habits of the mind that are not entirely compatible with a thought-life taken captive to Jesus Christ, amidst hungers of the heart that can too easily produce altars of the mind aligned to other lordships. But where amongst us are our own Newbigin or Stott or Zacharias to help us in faithfully addressing our own intellectual world? How are we to understand and interpret the intellectual realities of our modern Africa, how develop a vibrant, winsome theological life that is effectively engaged with this powerful component of our context, so that the blessings of Christ's lordship may be fully experienced in our midst?

### MODERN AFRICA

If we were to attempt a quick introductory understanding of the particularities of modern Africa's intellectual life, where does one begin? Granted that such an attempt must inevitably involve an excess of generalisation and simplification, perhaps the best place to start is by focusing on modern Africa. And the first essential thing to point out about modern Africa would be that within recent years Africa has entered a new era.

It has been customary to divide Africa's modern history almost automatically into three major phases, namely the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the post-colonial independence period. That is how we customarily think of modern African history. But in some major respects that is becoming an insufficient way of framing things. It appears that in fact we are no longer in the post-colonial independence era. We have by now entered a fourth era in modern Africa's history. Understanding this, and factoring for its implications, not least in our intellectual lives, has consequences. The times have shifted. At the global level the year 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and all that followed, has come to be recognised as the end of an era for the entire post-World War II global order. But for Africa it is becoming increasingly apparent that the vital years between 1989 and 1994 will also likely come to be seen as a watershed time of transition, as *the end of one era for Africa, and the beginning of another.*

That is to say, in some consequential respects the post-colonial 'independence era' of modern African history has now run out, and another era has commenced. Not everyone has noticed it yet, it is not clear what the new era should be called, and it is certainly not yet clear what the new era will

entail for Africa. But the old post-colonial order is certainly no longer functioning. It has played itself out. More particularly the old familiar interpretations no longer apply. And within elite African intellectual circles the assumptions that have ruled since independence seem increasingly to lack plausibility and efficacy. A sense of ideological exhaustion and pessimism has emerged, even intellectual despair. A shift of intellectual perspective has begun to leave its traces in the relevant professional literature. As the Ethiopian scholar Messay Kebede says of today's African intellectual elites: "The poetry is gone, and cynicism is the general attitude." Which reminds us also of the Nigerian novelist Achebe's haunting words to his fellow Africans: "We have lost the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for ourselves; are we intent on losing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century for our children?"

It is a new time, and one that has begun to demand new thinking and new assessments, as Africa has come to face an extraordinary combination of new circumstances. What are some of these extraordinary new circumstances? Any list would certainly need to include the following:

- ♦ The collapse of the bi-polar international world order, beginning in 1989 (until which time Africa's most effective strategy in international diplomacy had often been to play the non-aligned card).
- ♦ The discrediting of socialist economic theory since 1989 (which until then had been favoured in large stretches of post-colonial independent Africa).
- ♦ The disappearance of a common enemy (with the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and Mandela's accession in 1994).
- ♦ The unprecedented ravages of the AIDS plague, unprecedented human rights abuses (as in Rwanda and Sudan), and the emergence of the exceptional phenomenon of 'failed states' (as with Liberia until recently, and Somalia still).
- ♦ The increasing marginalization of Africa in world strategic planning and in world consciousness, (even as the rest of the world becomes increasingly integrated).
- ♦ And dare we add, in an entirely different dimension, the growing realisation in many venues of learning, as well as in Christian circles, and even in the secular media, that—to an entirely unanticipated degree, and despite everything else affecting the continent—Africa is rapidly

becoming one of the principal centres of world Christianity, with all that that entails.

♦ Finally, for our purposes a deeply consequential outcome of these other developments, one that we dare not ignore, is that in our day the entire *intellectual* project of post-colonial independent Africa is increasingly being called into question in Africa, as no longer matching to modern African realities and no longer efficacious for addressing Africa's future.

Let me now explore this last factor with you, by an abbreviated sketch of the historical dynamics of modern African intellectual life.

## MODERN AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL LIFE

### 1. Social/historical dynamics

It is commonly agreed that at the heart of Africa's intellectual life for much of the past century has been the distinctive issue of *African identity*. Why so? This is not the dominant characteristic of intellectual life for other continents of the world. But this has been the characteristic theme for *this* continent, the inner motif, the ruling mindset. The core question has been: *What does it mean to be African?* What is entailed, what required, what implied?

This question has been worked out most specifically in terms of achieving a separate identity from the west. How can Africa not only achieve political independence from the west but also wrest independence from western *intellectual* hegemony? How are we to enact our separate African identity in all fields of inquiry? The intellectual life of Africa has largely shaped itself around this overarching quest, a quest that has functioned as the principal dynamic of Africa's intellectual life in almost all fields of learning and expression during the 20th century.

How did this come to be? Perhaps we can better understand the dynamics of this movement, both its power and its limitations, by probing its social/historical origins, which are rather simply told. The indigenous cultures of pre-colonial Africa had not only their traditional rulers but as well their traditional intelligentsia. A key impact of colonialism was that it largely disempowered these traditional elites and rendered them seemingly superfluous. That was part of what Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was about.

Along with this outcome was a second powerful, but unintended, consequence of colonialism, namely the emergence of the new African elite, the western-educated African (e.g. Azikwe, Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Nyerere). As a class this group emerged by successful accommodation to the West through western education. They then used just that advantage to organise the demise of the colonial system and to become Africa's new ruling class, distinct from the colonial regimes which they had overthrown, but also distinct, as it happens, from Africa's earlier traditional rulers and intelligentsia whom they now displaced. It is this new group, the modern African educated elite, who shaped post-colonial modern Africa, and who continue to shape modern African intellectual life.

Essential to understanding these developments is to notice that modern Africa's intelligentsia emerged by superior assimilation to the west (culturally), and then came to power by rejection of the west (politically). Functioning between two worlds as it were, being neither entirely traditional African nor entirely modern European, they were thus, as Nehru of India put it, "out of place everywhere, at home nowhere". So they proceeded to refashion Africa into their own image, to remake it into their home, neither traditional Africa nor modern Europe, but *modern Africa*. It is this group, the modern African educated elite, that has determined the shape of modern Africa. And it is hence their values, anxieties, preoccupations, and dreams, which have everywhere dominated the intellectual life of modern Africa, and which clarify its particular configurations.

Modern African intellectual life therefore reflects its generative centre, the modern African educated elite caught between two worlds, and therefore asking: *what does it mean to be a modern African?* It is for this reason that the question of identity informs the sub-structure of most advanced levels of organised reflection. This has been true in the novels and plays of modern Africa, the academic journals and the newspaper editorials, the lectures and debates of university life, the books on African history and political science and educational theory and sociology, and not least the textbooks provided for primary and secondary schooling across the continent.

## **2. A defining matrix**

In understanding modern African social dynamics as they relate to intellectual life, it is essential to recognise the formative part played by Africa's pervasive, problematic encounter with Europe, with the west, both in the colonial era and also in the post-colonial independence era. The overarching patterns of modern Africa's *intellectual* life are best interpreted

not primarily in terms of some defining common culture evident throughout the continent, but in terms of this common modern historical experience for Africa. This interpretive approach to African intellectual modernity points not only to the encounter with Europe, but as well to the fundamentally bi-polar, double-sided response of African societies in modern times to that prolonged encounter. That combination within Africa's modern history, namely (a) Africa's pervasive problematic experience with Europe, together with (b) Africa's pervasive double-sided response to that experience, may be seen as the defining matrix of modern Africa's intellectual life.

We are all familiar with Africa's encounter with Europe in modern history. But let me unpack somewhat further what is seen as Africa's double-sided response in that encounter. Western cultural influence is perceived to have worked out in African societies in two contrasting respects. On the one hand, both under colonialism and with the arrival of independence, Africa's people have everywhere demonstrated a drive to acquire and incorporate all that might be of use from the west. In this respect western culture has functioned, for better or worse, as a vast transformative cultural stimulant on the continent. People wanted much of what the west had to offer, and they organised themselves to get it by whatever means might work. That was true of course during the colonial period. But throughout the more recent period of political independence as well, African peoples everywhere have embraced a shared commitment to national 'development', to a progressive modernisation of all economic, political and social systems. Under the rubric of development or modernisation, Africa has thus pursued and enacted social institutions everywhere that have derived not from traditional Africa but directly from western models.

Think with me here of such familiar components of our modern African society as the labour unions; the entire educational apparatus; the civil service; the political structures; the economic structures; the postal service; the military; our transportation facilities (roads, airlines); the health services; and especially communications (newspapers, radio, TV, cell phones, and now the internet). The evidence is everywhere pervasive and unavoidable. In this respect what colonialism had begun, African nations set themselves to complete, albeit on their own terms, as part of their own agenda, for the benefit of their own people. Although we almost never acknowledge this abundantly evident reality of modern Africa, certainly almost never in our familiar contextualization discourse, nevertheless this enacted and facilitated 'westernisation' is a core aspect of the modern African social context.

At the same time Africa has been characterised by an overwhelming commitment to self-direction, to a revival of interest in Africa's heritage, a need to seek and explicate an African identity and 'authenticity' over against the domineering influence of Europe, and therefore a determination to critique and renounce the west, and to affirm Africa's traditional life and culture, to assert African distinctive dignity and worth. This commitment to selfhood, this need for self-distinction over against the west, this resistance to its unwelcome political, economic, and cultural embrace, has functioned as a fundamental dynamic of African self-reflection for the past century. It too is a core aspect of modern African social reality.

### **3. Voices and feet**

Carrying forward our too abbreviated analysis, it is important to notice that this alternating response - as one scholar put it, this "rhythm of attraction and repulsion" toward the west, has worked itself out on the continent in a distinctive manner. Here in essence is the unusual pattern that has been in play. On the one hand the determination to assert separate identity from the west, to renounce the west, and to affirm Africa's traditional heritage, is to be found everywhere EXPLICIT AND ARTICULATED in modern Africa. So much so that we hardly notice it. And on the other hand, and simultaneously, we find everywhere IMPLICIT AND ENACTED in modern Africa a determination to take over as much of the benefits of western culture and technology as possible, an almost indiscriminate westernisation, a characteristic that is demonstrably pervasive throughout modern African society. So much so that we hardly notice it. In an important sense there is a paradox at work in society, one tendency articulated but rarely enacted, and the contrary tendency enacted but rarely articulated.

Hence there would seem to be a double-tide at work in the foundational realities of modern Africa, a *vocalized* orientation and an *enacted* orientation, the voices and the feet we might say, finding each their own separate way. It is the articulate *voices* of Africa's intellectual class that are ever effectively critiquing Europe and its influence on Africa, that are ever elaborating Africa's separate identity from the west, evident in university lectures, the published symposia, the set curricula and textbooks of public education, the newspaper editorials. And it is the enacted *feet* of Africa, of the ordinary citizenry of Africa, steadily pursuing westernised modernity, evident everywhere in the market place, in the minibuses, in the school uniforms, in ordinary home furnishings, and not least on local television. In an important sense one might say that the articulate voice of Africa speaks in one direction,

while the innovative feet of Africa move in the other direction. This is of course an over-simplification; it is not all that there is to modern Africa; things are far more complex. But surfacing this aspect of African reality may help us in understanding where modern African *intellectual life* fits in, its particular role in modern Africa, its vitalities, and also its limitations.

For the intellectual life of Africa is nothing if it is not the *voice* of Africa, ever articulating African authenticity, African self-reliance, Africa's distinct identity, combined with a vigorous, sophisticated and effective critique of the west and its role in Africa. This commitment to a separate African identity over against the west is commonly recognised in the academic literature as the root integrating motif of the African nationalist ideology which enabled the achievement of independence for much of the continent in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and which has dominated all venues of political life since. But just this theme of achieving separate African identity also underlies the principal intellectual developments in African literature, African art, history, sociology, political science, economics, philosophy, jurisprudence, educational theory - and theology. In each of these areas the available literature is now vast, and the achievements have been extraordinary. Africa has indeed taken charge of its own intellectual life, and of the interpretation of its own realities.

#### **4. African identity**

Perhaps this is the way to analyze things, perhaps not quite. But in some important sense this is the way things are. And given these dynamics, perhaps we can thus arrive at a better understanding of why the dominant theme of Africa's intellectual life for the past century has been the issue of *African identity*. This is not characteristic of the intellectual life of other continents. The intellectual life of other continents marches to other themes, other necessities, other habits of the mind. But for this continent, our continent, this is the characteristic theme, the inner motif, the ruling mindset: *what does it mean to be African?* What is entailed, what required, what implied?

And, so crucial to our interests as African evangelical believers, it is directly out of this intellectual matrix that, beginning in the early 1960s, the African Theology movement emerged and took its form. This is the underlying explanation for the way it shaped itself, the direction it adopted. The characteristic preoccupations of African Theology, the implicit agendas, the necessary themes, even the rooted conflicts and discontinuities of African Theology, have almost exactly matched the dynamics of the larger intellectual life that has been distinctive of modern Africa.

Thus if the African intellectual is asking: what does it mean to be African, then African Theology set itself to answer: what does it mean to be an African Christian? If the African intellectual looks to Africa's traditional cultural heritage to explain its distinctness, African Theology proposed to look to Africa's traditional *religious* heritage for framing its own distinctive identity. How do we as African Christians legitimate ourselves amidst Africa's assertion of distinction from the west, how do we as African Christians explain ourselves in relation to modern Africa's insistent affirmation of its traditional heritage? For the Idowu and Mbiti among us, the Mugambi and Bediako of Christian Africa, answering these questions has been taken to be the defining task of African Theology, the essential theological project. The African intellectual quest has been taken as the proper framing for the African theological quest.

### **5. African realities**

But lying at the base of Africa's vocalised intellectual life remains a critical deficiency, and one that is increasingly being acknowledged. Namely, that for all its evident usefulness Africa's intellectual life has not sufficiently addressed the full scope of modern African realities. Granted its awesome achievements, nevertheless African intellectual discourse has been leaving a massive gap in addressing the realities of Africa. For what is to be done with the *feet* of Africa? Who is speaking to the inherent realities of Africa's feet, to their necessities, their relentless quest for modernisation? Make no mistake, modern Africa is not traditional Africa. And to be forever elaborating the distinction of Africa from the west can only take us so far in the realities of the modern world.

The ever-evident realities are that modern Africa is pervasively affected by traditional Africa, and yet it is not traditional Africa. And it is also pervasively affected by the west, and yet it is not the west. It is a unique combination, neither traditional Africa nor modern Europe, but *modern Africa*. Rare as it is to hear anyone ever saying this, nevertheless it is almost impossible to find any part of contemporary Africa that is not now substantively affected by westernisation. And it is almost impossible to find any part of contemporary Africa that is not still substantively affected by traditional Africa. For this reason, you cannot understand Africa without understanding traditional Africa. And likewise (strange as it may sound) you cannot understand Africa any longer without understanding the west.

And yet, so consequential to what we are attempting to assess here, the *intellectual* dynamics of the continent to which we have been accustomed

have tended to focus exclusively on establishing Africa's distinct identity over against the west, while letting Africa's self-directed westernisation happen without effective intellectual acknowledgement and inquiry. This apparently contradictory situation would seem to be so because the intelligentsia, the elite of Africa's intellectual world, are themselves in their very own persons, in their very own achievements and status, often the primary examples of successful westernization in Africa. With the result, it would seem, that while their own feet in fact point one way, and emphatically so, in necessary compensation their voices must be heard ever more emphatically and articulately speaking in the other direction. A double-tide is at work, affirming in one direction, while proceeding in the other. With the inevitably debilitating result that only half of Africa's contemporary reality has been addressed by Africa's dominant intellectual discourse.

## **6. Evaluations**

As evidence has persisted and increased that the post-independence scheme of things in Africa is no longer delivering, an era of reassessment is seemingly emerging among Africa's thinkers and planners. A suspicion is increasingly heard that at the root of much of Africa's problems today is not least a *failed ideology*. Perhaps Africa's problems are not just poor leadership, not just multiple calamities, and not just western economic imperialism, impactful as each of these has been. Rather a principal problem may also be a dominant intellectual ideology that has lost its efficacy.

In many respects Africa's dominant intellectual ideology since the 1950s has been right in what it affirms, and useful in what it has achieved. But awkwardly enough, this ideology no longer matches modern African realities. It fails to generate constructive critical reflection on what was not good as well as what was good in traditional Africa, nor constructive critical reflection on what may be good as well as not good in the continent's pervasive westernisation. Hence there is no effective critical ideological undergirding for the entire process of economic and social development and modernisation, which is nevertheless central to the life of most African countries since independence.

Equally consequential, and worthy of equal notice, is that this ideological perspective fails to position Africa effectively for addressing its future within the modern world order. Within the modern world order of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, forever asserting one's distinctness, one's difference, one's independence, is insufficient for functioning to one's own best good in what is now a global community. To continue to build an intellectual ideology of African identity

grounded solely on the premise of *difference* will not and cannot ultimately serve Africa's longer-term interests.

The reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is that we are now part of a global village, for better or worse, unavoidably. Our ideology must now be such as to equip us somehow to function fruitfully as a part of that global community. The suggestion being considered, however tentatively, is that the old nationalist ideology that brought about African independence and that has dominated African habits of the mind for so long *is in fact now inadequate for taking Africa into a viable future.*

Certainly *dependence* will not serve Africa. It must be rejected, as indeed it has been. But mere *independence* will also not suffice. Within the global village that we now inhabit, Africa must find ways to move beyond the confinements inherent in such ideological commitments. Only an ideology of self-directed *interdependence* can effectively serve in addressing Africa's future.

Africa must not give up guarding its hard-won independence. Nor should it forget its rich cultural heritage. Nor should it submerge its distinctive identity. Rather the challenge for Africa today is to go *beyond* the older quest for an independent identity, and incorporate that now within a larger ideology for achieving Africa's constructive participation in the world community. For if Africa is not to become an active participant in the emerging global village, what other role can be in store for it?

## **7. Implications**

And why does all this matter, why should it matter? It matters for us not least because the intellectual movement we call 'African Theology', the principal *intellectual* project of African Christianity for the past half century, arose not as a critical engagement with the dominant intellectual life of Africa, but directly as a sub-set of all these intellectual instincts, discomforts, preoccupations and commitments that we have been discussing. The African Theology project evolved itself from within the framing of this larger intellectual quest, as a subordinate component. And to the extent that it has done so, it therefore now also carries within itself all of these consequential deficiencies and limitations that affect the larger movement.

And where does that leave us as evangelical believers amidst the dominant intellectual life, the prevailing ideology, of our continent? Ideology is always in some measure an enchantment, *anywhere*, not just in Africa; a unifying meta-narrative, a constructive mystification provided by our social context.

And the faithful believer is meant to recognise it as such, and to assess and critique it thoughtfully. This is by no means an easy task. But a Christian committed to a discipleship of the mind, to letting every thought be taken captive to Jesus Christ, must do so.

The reigning intellectual ideologies of the secular west are not a legitimate grounding for western Christian intellectual endeavours. Nor are the dominant intellectual trends of Asia a legitimate foundation for Asian Christian intellectual endeavour. So also the reigning intellectual ideology of post-colonial nationalist Africa was not and is not a legitimate grounding for African Christian intellectual endeavours. Believers anywhere are meant to understand and engage their intellectual context for Christ, not simply be co-opted by that intellectual context. This is fundamental to our calling, if we are to be faithful to the biblical witness. *The distinctive theological task for African Christianity therefore is not to find the way to fit Christianity appropriately within the African intellectual project, but to find the way to fit Africa appropriately within the Christian intellectual project.*

This was the reason for the difference between Kato and the majority in the African Theology movement of his day. And I am proposing that in our day as evangelicals in Africa we will only get our bearings for how we should assess the ongoing discourse of African Theology, and how engage it, if we take a clear, critically realistic perspective on the cross-currents of modernity and traditionalism in Africa, on how they shape the intellectual life of Africa, how they generate often contradictory intellectual fashions, and how they affect our own thinking.

For this purpose the contextualisation discourse so familiar within our African evangelical circles is insufficient. Granted its innumerable benefits and insights, the contextualisation discussion as commonly pursued has not provided the bearings needed for this inquiry, because it works from an excessive focus on Africa's traditional context rather than the complexities of the modern African context, and because in doing so the contextual significance of African intellectual modernity has essentially eluded it. In consequence it also misreads the African Theology movement, understanding it as but another version of the contextualisation discussion, which it is not. With the result that African evangelical reflection can often itself become little more than a milder, more gracious version of the African Theology project.

We will only get our bearings as faithful believers within the modern African context if we decline to be swept along by the intellectual fashions that dominate that context, while also understanding and engaging them. It is

this I suggest that we must recognise and understand if we are to understand modern Africa, and Christian intellectual responsibilities in modern Africa.

### AFRICAN THEOLOGY

This overarching way of framing our reflection now allows, I suggest, a fresh and productive approach in understanding and interpreting ‘African Theology’, the movement that has functioned as the principal *intellectual* project of African Christianity for the past half century. It may be relevant to mention at this point my overall treatment of this movement published in the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, under the title “African Theology: Its History, Dynamics, Scope and Future” (*AJET* 21.2 [2002] pp 109-125). That article provides useful background for this presentation. It happens that I have also taught a course on African Theology, at both post-graduate and doctoral levels, for the past thirty years, in Africa and overseas. Students at Igbaja in Nigeria asked me to teach the first such course back in 1977, and I have just taught a course on African Theology earlier this year at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology in Addis.

My particular slant both in my written contributions and in such courses has been to interpret the African Theology movement specifically by situating it within the larger frame of Africa’s intellectual life, as I am doing here. I am proposing that this is the essential context for understanding the African Theology movement. This approach to understanding African Theology is by no means a common approach. But it is, I believe, a more historically grounded and intellectually realistic approach, and one that can prove fruitfully clarifying. It can also lead to challenging insights about our Christian intellectual responsibilities today in light of these realities.

#### 1. What is it?

Tracing out the history of this Christian intellectual movement in Africa would lead immediately to the earliest generation of participants in the 1960s, to Harry Sawyerr of Sierra Leone, to Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria, to John Mbiti of Kenya. Mbiti in particular continued to provide singularly articulate, substantive, and prolific contributions over the years. More recently one has encountered such names as Nyamiti of Tanzania, Pobee and Bediako of Ghana, Mugambi of Kenya, and many others, predominantly from Roman Catholic scholarly communities and those of mainline ecumenical orientation. An entire body of literature has developed, with annotated bibliographies, collections of papers, readers in principal sources, and surveys of the entire literature. Since I have already surveyed the African Theology movement as a

whole in the published material just mentioned, rather than repeating everything available there, let me here attempt to carry discussion forward by asking a sobering question, namely: *why did this very needed project go wrong?* To the extent that it represents a noble but flawed endeavour, in which particulars has it proven to be flawed?

## **2. Why did it go wrong?**

Let me specify two substantive assessments, two judgments, on why the African Theology movement went wrong, namely: (i) that African Theology largely mis-framed its foundational question; and (ii) that African Theology then generally attended to only half of the foundational question that it had framed for itself.

Speaking to the first of these assessments, the development of theological reflection suited to the needs and particularities of the African context should be recognised as an essential, and indeed as a biblically-warranted, task. I certainly believe so. And so did Kato. Theological contextualisation matters. African theological reflection matters. But the historical reality is that the intellectual movement we call 'African Theology' worked itself out primarily not from any biblical warrants but from other extraneous criteria. The task should have been pursued, and could have been pursued, as derivative of, as a sub-set of, African Christianity's biblical commitments. But instead this particular intellectual project within African Christianity formulated itself as a derivative of the secular nationalist intellectual commitments of its context. And in doing so it mistook its fundamental task and sadly went off course.

In the nature of the case the defining matrix out of which a valid African Christian theology is to be constructed, and against which its achievements should be measured, is neither Africa's traditional religions, nor Africa's cultural context, nor Africa's modern intellectual quest, important as each of these may be. These have in fact functioned in combination as primal reference points for the African Theology movement. But as Professor Tite Tiénou and others have proposed, the nature of the enterprise requires that the defining matrix should instead be the present Christian community of Africa, with the full range of its needs and expectations, its requirements and preoccupations, as it seeks to be a faithful biblical community before its Lord within its African context. This framing for the inquiry actually allows for all the issues raised by the agenda of African Theology to date. But it suggests a good many others as well, others not addressed in the dominant agenda, some of considerable consequence. To the extent that African Theology has

formulated its fundamental task on other terms, it has functioned from an inadequate axis.

That was error one, misconstruing its foundational task, by letting the context set the agenda. In the nature of the case, that meant (as I am about the elaborate) taking the problem of African Christian identity within modern Africa as *the controlling theological question*, rather than placing that important question of identity within a larger and more foundational theological task. And error two was then to answer only half of the question on African Christian identity. If the central theological question was taken to be: what does it mean to be a Christian African, then the issue of Christianity's correlation with its traditional African context was correctly taken as essential (as both Mbiti and Bediako have taken it to be). But this ought to have been recognized as only half of the essential theological question of African Christian identity, and not the primal half. So what was the second even more foundational half, the missed half, the ignored half?

### **3. The co-opted agenda**

As Byang Kato and others have argued, the first, the primal half of the question for African Christian identity would need to be the effective correlation of African Christianity with its *Christian* heritage. It is right and good to ask, as African Theology has insistently done, how may African Christianity become ever more authentically African. But in the nature of the case it should first and even more insistently have been asking how may African Christianity be and become ever more authentically *Christian*. Yet throughout the literature this half of the question has only rarely surfaced, and mostly only because evangelical Africans have been insistent on it.

Without the pursuit of *both* aspects of the question of African Christian identity, the realities of human nature anywhere suggest, as do also the evidences of Christian history, that theological reflection can arrive all too readily at what one might term an *over-realized contextualization*, where the essential identity, purpose, and value of African Christianity *for* Africa—and for God's good will in Africa—have been lost. One can too easily end up with a Christianity whose *African* identity has been stoutly asserted, but whose *Christian* authenticity is left ill-defined, assumed, and negotiable. And that is what has largely happened within the discussion we call African Theology.

It happened because the African Theology project evolved itself not as an expression first and foremost of biblical commitments, but as a contributive sub-set of modern Africa's intellectual quest. And in doing so it therefore did

not set itself to critically engage those intellectual trends of the continent, but rather was willingly co-opted by them, subordinated to their agenda.

This is certainly nothing new in the history of Christianity. Down through history there have been many who worked out their Christian agenda as a subordinate project of their culture's agenda. The theological mindset that has been largely dominant in western Christianity for several centuries is precisely that, an intentional accommodation of Christian faith to the strictures and requirements of the ruling mindset of European enlightenment modernity in the western world. It was then unavoidable that that mindset became and continues to be hostile to evangelical Christianity, given evangelical Christianity's inherent commitments. And as biblically-grounded evangelical believers, what our commitments call us to, whether in Europe or Asia or Africa or wherever, is neither to ignore our intellectual setting, nor to accommodate to it, but intentionally to understand and engage it for the sake of the gospel. This is what a Lesslie Newbigin, a John Stott or a Ravi Zacharias has attempted to do for succeeding generations elsewhere in the evangelical world. It is what we are called to do in our generation here in our continent, if we are effectively to embrace our Christian intellectual responsibilities on this continent.

### **GOING BEYOND 'AFRICAN THEOLOGY'**

In a separate lecture in this series I have elaborated the theme that, while honouring Byang Kato and building on his commitments and vision, we must also now go beyond Kato. I want to suggest here that it is now time as well to go beyond the African Theology movement of the last century, and even beyond some of its best recent practitioners. To clarify what I mean, let me for convenience use Kwame Bediako as an example of what I am saying, since he has been our near neighbour both geographically and in theological orientation, and his writings may be more familiar to us than most other examples. Speaking of going not only beyond Kato but also now beyond Bediako may therefore prove more helpfully clarifying.

Kwame Bediako has commonly been regarded, with good reason, as one of African Christianity's most articulate, creative, productive theologians. Following in the path of Mbiti, he has represented in many respects the best that the African Theology project has had to offer. We have much to learn from him. Yet, like Mbiti, he has explicitly framed his approach within structures familiar from the larger African Theology quest. And in consequence his contributions cannot entirely elude the inner limitations and deficiencies of that movement. To the extent that Bediako's way of framing

the core questions of the Christian intellectual project in Africa are, as with the African Theology movement, directly embedded in African intellectual modernity, in certain substantive respects his approach and his characteristic emphases are therefore, as with African intellectual modernity, no longer enough. Even as we continue to learn from him, might we now need in some important respects also to begin working our way forward beyond some of the limitations implicit in his brilliant achievements?

Let me mention for your consideration in this respect at least five areas in which we may find that we want to adjust our orientations, if African evangelical theological reflection is to begin moving on now not only beyond Kato but also beyond Bediako.

- *Refocus on Africa's modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century context.* As with the African Theology movement as a whole, the inner structures of Bediako's theological project can at times seem excessively delimited by their focus on traditional Africa, on building bridges between African Christianity and Africa's cultural heritage. We do need such bridges, and there are valuable insights to be gained from such constructions. But they are also assuredly not enough. Defining the theological task in this way is too constrictive. Modern Africa is more than traditional Africa, and living as a believing community in modern Africa requires a larger, more encompassing theological agenda. Bediako's project can at times seem more suited to equipping us theologically for life in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Africa than for life in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa.
- *Refocus on Africa's intellectual context.* Neither Bediako nor the African evangelical community has demonstrated extended critical engagement with a central element of our African context, namely modern Africa's dominant intellectual life. African evangelicalism has largely ignored this aspect of its context, while African theologians like Bediako have too often seemed in largely uncritical collaboration. It is time to go beyond these limitations. We should not allow ourselves to be co-opted into the agenda of our intellectual context. At the same time we need to embrace within our own essential agenda a biblically-grounded, realistic, critical awareness of and engagement with this powerful component of our context.
- *Refocus on Africa's global context.* So much exposition in African Theology, and not least in Bediako, seems confined to a strictly *bilateral* understanding of Africa's context, assessing contextual issues

insistently in terms of differences between Africa on the one hand and the West on the other. This bilateral approach is insufficient on two counts.

First, modern Africa's own *internal* context is more complicated than such assessment allows for. Africa is itself now pervasively westernised. The African Theology project is a westernised discourse. In an important sense its practitioners are themselves westernised, including Bediako. Hence such strictly dichotomised modes of contextual analysis are inadequate. It is time for them to be superseded by a more nuanced, realistic understanding of modern Africa's multiplex internal context.

Secondly, and as consequentially, there is more to Africa's *external* context than just the west. Andrew Walls has rightly challenged African Christianity, as it increasingly becomes a major centre of world Christianity, to shift its analytical self-understanding to its place in that more encompassing context. That worthy African Christian scholar Lamin Sanneh recently wrote a book with the significant title: *Post-Western Christianity*. We need now to go beyond any fixation with asserting African Christian identity over against Western Christianity, and begin more frequently to focus on our identity and calling within a now global Christianity, a global Christianity which is now *post-western*. In our theological assessments, we must now move beyond the limitations of a merely *bilateral* focus, and instead begin to think *multilaterally*.

- *Refocus on balanced critical engagement.* Too often the impression has been allowed in African Theology that western influence in Africa mostly merits only critique and rejection, whereas the influence of Africa's traditional heritage mostly merits only affirmation. In our theological endeavours we now need to move beyond those imbalances that characterised intellectual passions in the past century, towards a more realistic and even-handed engagement in our 21<sup>st</sup> Century world. The difficult challenges affecting Africa's future demand no less. Grounded in biblical commitments, our theology should now manifest a capacity for both affirmation and critique toward all aspects of our modern African context, including both its western and its traditional components.

- *Refocus on authentic Christian identity.* Mbiti, Bediako, and Kato have all affirmed the urgent need for a Christianity on our continent that

is authentically *African*. But it is time to move beyond all perspectives that fail to ground this emphasis in a prior commitment to attaining and enhancing authentic *Christian* identity for the believing community in Africa. It is not enough merely to assume such identity, as African Theology has been inclined to do.

This would also entail moving forward in finding—as African Theology has not—the appropriate theological framing that will enable the believing community in Africa more effectively to affirm, identify with, and embrace its God-given Christian heritage and its extended Christian family *wherever* they may be found in the world and in Christian history.

## AFRICAN CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

### 1. A Theological Key

Granted that we should not be governed by the African intellectual agenda, how should we nevertheless address the question at the heart of that agenda, and the one posed at the heart of African Theology, if we are among those committed to biblical Christianity on the continent? The challenge for the thoughtful Christian in Africa, to my mind, is not to ignore nor to renounce the intellectual passions of the continent, nor to be co-opted by them, as the African Theology movement has largely done. The challenge is rather, I suggest, to engage these powerful intellectual dynamics. What would it mean for us to engage the intellectual life of Africa on the question of African Christian identity?

Seeking to answer that question at its core, I think it would need to be done through articulating by voice, and demonstrating by life, the possibility, in Christ, of a fruitful inner integration between Christian allegiance and African identity. If we were to demonstrate the possibilities of an African Christian identity that is focused in positive terms, that is prepared for *interdependence* rather than merely *independence*, and for participation rather than mere resistance and opposition, we would be showing a way forward out of the intellectual dilemmas, limitations and failures that presently afflict the continent and its intellectual life.

Amidst the conflicting tides of our context, the double-tides pulling towards traditional Africa and simultaneously pulling towards unacknowledged westernisation, the challenge to biblically-committed African Christianity is not to become captive to either. Rather the challenge is for us to

show a viable alternative to both, to demonstrate a different way, a third way. We stand amidst a double-tide, voices and feet. Amidst that double-tide we must get our own feet down on solid rock, and get our heads above water—thereby gaining both a firm footing and also a clear view, that can enable thoughtful, balanced, critical evaluation in all directions, recognising both the good and the bad in the conflicting currents. Until we gain this grounded and clear-sighted posture, we are likely ourselves also to be but dependent elements of the prevailing currents.

And as we begin to nurture our distinct African Christian identity in this way, as some among us have already so well and nobly done, including Byang Kato, we will find the effective framework into which we may incorporate an appropriate, healthy, delimited, responsible sense of ethnic or national or continental identity, structured now within, and subordinate to, our overriding commitment to our Lord—a sense of identity therefore that can be constructive, participatory, fruitful, and liberating, rather than antagonistic, divisive and debilitating.

I wish to suggest that it is precisely in our theological commitments that we are offered the key for such an attainment. For surely the God we serve, this God who created all things, this God of the endless rich variety of this world, just this God chose within His good purposes to make us African or Asian or European. This God of variety who has built such rich complementarity into His creation, surely this God intended, willed, the emergence of African Christianity in the way it has so amazingly emerged in this past century. It has not happened by mistake, nor merely by natural social causation. Surely this God therefore intends through the church *in* Africa to contribute something *for* Africa—and also thereby to contribute something *from* Africa to the larger global community, things perhaps not otherwise available. That is indeed how He works, it is how He has routinely generated and guided things, for mutuality and for complementarity.

The effective key to a balanced African Christian identity for the new era is to be found, I suggest, in Paul's analogy of the Christian community as a body, with its many parts, each distinct, each necessary, each contributing, each needing the other, all working together. Here I suggest is the appropriate model for comprehending a balanced and integrated and affirming sense of Christian identity in Africa today. If we need others overseas to be what God has called them to be, they also need us to be what God has called us to be. That is to say, only by being appropriately *African* can committed African Christians bring their particular contribution to the larger body of Christ. It is

the God-granted privilege, and duty, for African Christianity today to search out and embody winsomely, before a watching and needy continent, and world, this meaning of being a Christian African, authentically Christian and authentically African. And hence the legitimacy of Byang Kato's ringing challenge: "Let African Christians be Christian *Africans!*"

## **2. Complementarity**

Let me explore the practical implications of this perspective on biblical complementarity a little further. If we as African Christians simply merge into a new homogenised world order, losing any distinctive identity, we cannot bring to the table the particular richness that God intended by making us African. And if we merely insist on our independent distinctness, effectively saying "we have no need of you", we also fail to participate in God's larger purposes, serving the body of Christ elsewhere and being served by them.

Let us prepare ourselves to join the feast, the festivities, not sitting off by ourselves, ever asserting the quality of our distinctive foods. Nor should we join the grand feast empty handed, bringing nothing. Let us equip ourselves to bring our share, our African contribution, knowing how to cook it to be tasty and nourishing to believers anywhere. And let us be ready as well to benefit from the dishes that others have likewise prepared and are graciously sharing. How very African, and how very Christian, this approach would be, this vision of complementarity.

Somehow as educated African believers we are meant to find an inner integration between our Christian allegiance and our African setting, which will permit us to affirm God's ways, and our own place within those ways. The solution cannot be merely in making Christianity more African, nor can it be resolved by choosing Christ over against African identity. It is rather a duty of an African Christian to search out and embody the meaning of being truly Christian and truly African, under the Lordship of Christ.

If I am only partly right, then there lies before us a remarkable calling and opportunity for African evangelical Christianity in our day, an opportunity to take the lead, to take the initiative, to show the way forwards towards health and light and God's blessing for Africa and through Africa. To accomplish this we are called to get our feet down on rock, and our head above the prevailing tides—so that we are not swept to and fro by every wind; so that we may become adult in mind, so that we may be in bondage to no ideology but Christ's—and by His power then winsomely engage every alternative ideology

of our contexts. That is our Christian intellectual responsibility in modern Africa.

### CONCLUSION

What then shall we say in conclusion? If African Christianity is to flourish for God's good purpose in and for Africa, rather than merely serving as a collaborative element of the dominant intellectual trends of its secular context, then it must both remain profoundly alive to its biblical foundations, and at the same time sensitively attentive to the dynamic realities of its present context. And that requires not least that it should be attuned to and engaged with its *intellectual* context. That is to say, it must learn to address not only its evangelistic and social responsibilities, but also to embrace its intellectual and theological responsibilities within modern Africa. It must develop a life of the mind that is theologically vibrant, biblically sound, and sensitively suited to the contextual realities of modern Africa, including the modern African intellectual context. That is precisely what Kato was calling for. That was his urgent challenge to African evangelicalism in his day, still applicable more than three decades later. Only by achieving a mature theological dimension in its life, suited to the modern African context, engaged with modern African intellectual realities, will the church in Africa be able to meet the urgent needs thrust upon it by its rapid growth, and the remarkable opportunities opened up for it by that growth. May God grant us the grace to embrace this calling.

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY FOR THEOLOGIANS TODAY

David Tarus <sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*This article seeks to highlight the significance of intellectual humility for theologians and ministers of God's word today. The argument is that intellectual humility must accompany the acquiring of theological knowledge. Many scholars have been accused of being 'too intellectual' or 'too complicated', perhaps out of an attempt to appear scholarly. Intellectual virtues like honesty, courage, humility and tolerance are diminishing. The paper introduces the study by showing ways intellectual pride is evident among scholars today. Secondly, intellectual humility is defined. Thirdly, because the pursuit of intellectual humility must be rooted in the teachings of the church, the paper will briefly highlight some historical truth gleaned from past Christian writers. Finally, the paper will attempt to establish the biblical teaching on the mind and noetic<sup>2</sup> sanctification. In a nutshell therefore, this paper seeks to emphasize the promotion of checks and balances to scholars' commitment to reason, rationality and evidence, and encourage the pursuit and attainment of intellectual humility.*

## INTRODUCTION

There exists such a thing as pride of the educated mind. This very chronic virus infects intellectuals as well as their subjects and has been referred to as the "right answer" virus or intellectual pride. There is a dangerous disposition to impose oneself upon others, a confident egoism far removed from true piety and obedience to God. This paper seeks to counteract this pride by encouraging intellectual humility. The focus of the paper is mainly on theologians.

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<sup>2</sup> The word "noetic" is derived from the Greek word "nous," meaning mind, intelligence or ways of knowing.

Helmut Thielicke, in his outstanding classic read, reminded his students that they must constantly strive to be true theologians, always seeking to think within the community of God's people, for that community, and in the name of that community.<sup>3</sup> Thielicke reiterated that it is possible for theologians to be taken captive by the joy of possession of theological knowledge to such an extent that that possession clouds one's call to Christian love. In fact, Thielicke refers to this as a real spiritual disease, precisely "the disease of theologians."<sup>4</sup>

Following Thielicke's assertion, below are ways that intellectual pride may be evident among scholars today:

- Authoritarianism in speech not giving people time to express themselves
- Intellectual intolerance
- Limited ability to learn from others we perceive as less educated or spiritual
- The desire to be known and heard
- The craving for positions
- The use of difficult terminology in speeches, sermons
- Stereotypes about other people or cultures
- Treating other people as if they were objects of a research enterprise
- Monologue - one person dominating the communication
- Intellectual dishonesty
- Corruption in some academic institutions in order to be rewarded with tenure

### **INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY DEFINED**

Intellectual humility means having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including sensitivity to circumstance, sensitivity to bias, prejudice and the limitations of one's viewpoint. Intellectual humility is knowledge of ignorance, sensitivity to what you know and what you do not know. It is modesty about what one understands and how much weight should be given to the same. Intellectual humility is contrary to confident egoism, the attitude that our own views are so clearly important and right that they can and must be impressed on others. Intellectual humility is a reminder to scholars that vulnerability is no bad thing. Vulnerability is a reminder to be open to counter-evidence and counter-argument.<sup>5</sup> Intellectual humility enriches relevance, plausibility and truth, and therefore fosters conversation and dialogue.

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<sup>3</sup> Helmut Thielicke, trans from German by Charles L. Taylor, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1962), 4.

<sup>4</sup> Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> See Joseph Tussman, *Government and the Mind* (New York: Oxford University, 1977) and John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

Intellectual humility involves a proper assessment of character, accomplishments and positions. What this entails is seeking truth in the right way, for the right reason, using the right methods, and for the right purposes. The opposite of intellectual humility is intellectual arrogance. Intellectual arrogance is contrary to fair-mindedness and tolerance. As Socrates noted *arrogance does not befit the critical thinker*. In fact, the bare recognition that one has attained intellectual humility is pride par excellence! Intellectual humility must remain an ideal to pursue. Pursuing it will bring benefits that might not have otherwise have been attained. An ideal can serve to give our actions direction and to remind us that present achievements remain inadequate.

J.P. Moreland has excellently explained intellectual humility:

Humility and the associated traits of open-mindedness, self-criticality, and non-defensiveness [are] virtues relevant to the intellectual life. We must be willing to seek the truth in a spirit of humility with an admission of our own finitude; we must be willing to learn from our critics; and we need to learn to argue against our own positions in order to strengthen our understanding of them... The purpose of intellectual humility, open-mindedness, and so forth is not to create a skeptical mind that never lands on a position about anything, preferring to remain suspended in midair. Rather, the purpose is for you to do anything you can to remove your unhelpful biases and get at the truth in a reasoned way.<sup>6</sup>

An intellectual person must be a virtuous person. He or she must have moral principles or dispositions that govern his or her own academic behavior. Intellectual arrogance is against virtuous intellectual life. Ancient ethics recognized four cardinal, ethical virtues: temperance, justice, courage and practical wisdom. In the Middle Ages, Christian philosophers added three more: faith, hope, and charity.<sup>7</sup> A person of virtuous doxastic character habitually avoids the vices of skepticism and dogmatism while exhibiting such virtues as intellectual impartiality and courage.<sup>8</sup>

This paper turns briefly to some historical records that have elevated intellectual virtues.

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<sup>6</sup> J.P. Moreland, *Love God with all your Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997), 109.

<sup>7</sup> Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 901.

<sup>8</sup> Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 901; see also Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Intellectual Virtues and the Life of the Mind: On the Place of Virtues in Contemporary Epistemology* (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992).

## INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY IN HISTORY

The Jewish Community Rule<sup>9</sup> document, probably one of the oldest documents of the Essene community, written about 100 B.C., details a life of discipline that included tolerance. The Essenes emphasized a life of virtue, holiness and love. The Community Rule Four (4Q257 2 I) includes more than twenty virtues and more than twenty vices. The virtues the Qumran Community valued included meekness, patience, generous compassion, eternal goodness, intelligence, understanding, wisdom, enthusiasm, justice and careful behavior. The community disdained such vices as greed, falsehood, pride, dishonesty, and impatience among others.<sup>10</sup>

The Qumran Community called themselves a *Yahad* (community), “men of holiness” (1QS 8.23), a “witnesses of truth,” and an “elect of grace” (1QS 8:6). 1QS also adds, “So shall all together comprise a *Yahad* whose essence is truth, genuine humility, love of charity and righteous intent, caring for one another after this fashion within a holy society, comrades in an eternal fellowship” (2.24-25).<sup>11</sup> The *Yahad* was to constantly pursue charity and tolerance within the members of the ‘eternal fellowship.’ Christians however, must learn to engage intellectually with everybody. They must be open to dialogue, even from ‘outsiders’.

**Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200)** had a very strong philosophical and theological training established at the catechetical school of Alexandria. Even with such an education, he still emphasized simplicity of language for the benefit of the audience. Clement strives to express his arguments simply and directly, avoiding eloquence and complication. He drives home his points with apt quotations from authors with whom those present were most familiar. Clement is the first Christian writer to use literature as an instrument of peaceful labor within the church itself, not simply as a tool to combat heretics.<sup>12</sup> He esteems the Bible as the Word of God, which to him is the guide to a holy life and a source of truth. He admonishes his students to:

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<sup>9</sup> Also called Charter of a Jewish Sectarian Association or the Manual of Discipline, contained in the document recovered at the Qumran (1QS, 4Q255-264a, 5Q11). See Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 113.

<sup>10</sup> See *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, by Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, vol. 1 (New York: Brill, 1997), 77.

<sup>11</sup> From Wise, Abegg, and Cook *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*.

<sup>12</sup> Moreland, *Love God with all your Mind*, 54.

Practice quietness in word, quietness in deed, similarity in speech and walking; and avoid impetuous haste. For then the mind will remain steadfast... For the mind, seated on high on a quiet throne, gazing intently at God, must govern the passions... Be on your guard also against signs of arrogance, a haughty bearing, a high head, a dainty and lofty footstep.<sup>13</sup>

For Clement, one must have knowledge and faith. Faith is not mere guessing or an arbitrary decision as to what principles are true. True knowledge is the foundation of faith.<sup>14</sup>

**Bishop Augustine (354-430)** of the North African town of Hippo, in his *De Doctrina Christiana*, sought to vindicate the eloquence of Scripture in the face of elevated rhetoric. Augustine stated his goal: “My argument is with Christians who congratulate themselves on knowledge of the Holy Scriptures gained without any human guidance and who - if their claim is valid - thus enjoy a real and substantial blessing.”<sup>15</sup> Augustine contends that integrity of purpose and absolution of character must form intellectual pursuits. He notes:

... they [referring to those who were prideful] should learn without any pride, what has to be learned from a human teacher; and those responsible for teaching others should pass on, without pride or jealousy, the knowledge they have received.... Let us be aware of such arrogant and dangerous temptations...<sup>16</sup>

Augustine emphasized intellectual tolerance. To Augustine, a student of divine scripture must offer himself or herself to intensive, careful study and presentation of the Word. However, a good student of Scripture must exercise an open mind to listen to others’ discussion and views. Augustine said:

So the interpreter and teacher of the divine Scriptures, the defender of the true faith and vanquisher of error, must communicate what is good and eradicate what is bad, and in this process of speaking must win over the antagonistic, rouse the apathetic, and make clear to those who are not conversant with the matter under discussion what they should expect.... If listeners need information, there must be a presentation of facts.... To clarify disputed issues there must be rational argument and deployment of evidence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> J. G. Davies, *Daily Life of Early Christians* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1952), 22-23.

<sup>14</sup> See E. F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 113-74.

<sup>15</sup> Saint Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, Translated by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 104.

Augustine is careful to caution his readers against the selfish pursuit of eloquence at the expense of clarity. He advises that one must pursue ‘eloquence keeping pace with wisdom.’<sup>18</sup> Augustine notes that it is unwise to speak words that cannot be understood by the intended audience. Therefore, there is a need to exercise restraint in discourse. To Augustine, rational life does not owe its excellence to itself but to the truth, which it willingly obeys. In a memorable passage in his *Tractates on the Gospel of John* Augustine wrote that it was the “obedience of believing” that made understanding possible.<sup>19</sup> Obedience must precede argument.

**John Calvin (1509-1564)**, the eminent exegete and theologian of the Reformation period, emphasized that theologians must exercise humility in their study of God.

No man can have the least knowledge of true and sound, doctrine, without having been a disciple of the Scripture. Hence originates all true wisdom, when we embrace with reverence the testimony which God hath been pleased therein to deliver concerning himself. For obedience is the source, not only of an absolutely perfect and complete faith, but of all right knowledge of God.<sup>20</sup>

Without humility, self-knowledge serves pride and is the root of all error in philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Calvin was therefore “far above the weakness of aiming at the invention of novelties in theology, or of wishing to be regarded as the discoverer of new opinions.”<sup>22</sup> What he sought to foster was piety and obedience to God. Calvin was a strict interpreter of Scripture. To him, Scripture is God’s Word and we read Scripture that we might know both God and ourselves.<sup>23</sup> This knowledge of God we seek in Scripture is not the stuff of “idle speculations”, it is “piety,” ... “the acknowledgment that God is God and not us, the readiness to delight in God as the ‘fountain of every good’ and

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<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 114.

<sup>19</sup> See Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003, 183.

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (1536 Edition). Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, n.d. I, 6, 2.

<sup>21</sup> See Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II. ii 10-11; II. xvi. 1; III. ii. 23; III. xii. 5, 6; IV. xvii. 40 and also I. v. 4; II. 1. 1-3.

<sup>22</sup> William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburg, 1866), 296.

<sup>23</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of John Calvin as a biblical interpreter and commentator on Scripture, see Donald K. McKim’s *Calvin and the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

grateful to do his will".<sup>24</sup> Calvin identifies the purpose of Scripture as that which corrected idolatry and distinguished the true God from all humanly invented gods. God himself defines lawful worship.<sup>25</sup>

### THE BIBLE AND THE MIND

First, we start by affirming that humanity is created in God's image (Gen. 1:26, 27; Gen. 5:3 and 9:6). Every endowment that man possesses has its origin from God.<sup>26</sup> This is very significant in that it indicates that the creation of humanity is in a class by itself. Men and women are 'God's masterpiece'. In Genesis 2:7 we are told that God *formed* man. This expresses the idea of an artisan with his magnificent skills. God created man as the *magnum opus* of creation. Both male and female are created in God's image. Human reasoning is part of God's creation. God created humans with the capacity to reach toward Him by thinking, choosing and speaking. Our mind therefore, is God-given. John Stott puts it this way:

Our rationality is part of the divine image... To deny our rationality is therefore to deny our humanity, to become less than human beings. Scripture forbids us to behave like horses or mules, which are "without understanding", and commands us instead to be "mature."... Many imagine that faith is entirely irrational. But Scripture never sets faith and reason over against each other as incompatible. On the contrary, faith can only rise and grow within us by the use of our minds. "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee"; their trust springs from their knowledge of the trustworthiness of God's character. Again, "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee." Here trusting God and staying the mind on God are synonyms, and perfect peace is the result.<sup>27</sup>

At the time of creation, finiteness was the only thing that hindered humanity's ability to understand God. What they knew of God was true knowledge (Gen. 2:15-17, 19-20). Man's relation to God was perfect. They had the capacity to learn. They knew God as the sovereign Lord. In addition, they knew God in a Father-son relationship (Gen. 3:8). They knew that they had a responsibility toward God to obey what He said (Gen. 2:16-17; cf. 3:11). Fellowship with God was to become Adam's conscious possession. He was blessed with a moral consciousness.

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<sup>24</sup> See Roger E. Van Harn, ed., *The Ten Commandments for Jews, Christians, and Others* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 160.

<sup>25</sup> Van Harn, *The Ten Commandments for Jews, Christians, and Others*, 160.

<sup>26</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.1.1.

<sup>27</sup> John Stott, *Balanced Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975), 13.

Humanity then fell into sin and they lost their communion with God and from then on fell towards moral and spiritual destruction. The Fall affected humanity's mind such that apart from God's intervention through the work of the Holy Spirit, humanity cannot come to right moral conclusions. As a result of the fall, we all have a depraved and corrupted nature, which so inclines us toward sin that it is virtually impossible to do what pleases God (Rom. 5:18). Sin has affected human reasoning in that humanity continues to act contrary to reason by choosing ungodliness instead of godliness. Humanity will continually suppress the moral implications of the truth (Rom. 1:18). Moreover, not only was humanity's source of personal relationship interrupted, their intellectual functions became erroneous, for example, they began to reason in self-defense. The unregenerate sinner's thinking is fallen (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:21) and even the thinking of believers needs renewal (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24).

The mind of man desires to be autonomous. It constantly sits in judgment upon God and His ways and in the process condemns itself. That is what Paul means when he says, "those who hold down the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Since the fall of man, reason has been blind, proud, vain, and tangled in self-deceit (Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 4:8; Eph. 4:17,18). Fallen reason is not able, without grace, to lift itself up to a fair recognition of the divine mysteries (Matt. 11:27; 1 Cor. 2:14-16). After the fall of Adam and Eve, humanity's noetic condition was therefore, greatly altered.

Noetic depravity, however, does not mean that in a man's mind he commits all possible sins, or that he hates God completely. Humanity still operates according to certain principles of rationality. Human beings still seek after God through various rational means. But noetic depravity implies that we are destitute, in need of a redeemer and we cannot merit forgiveness by our actions (Rom. 7:18).

The Bible does not mention the term "noetic depravity" yet it attests to its reality. The Bible depicts humanity as on a moral and spiritual downward tendency apart from the redeeming activity of the gracious God. Paul, in his description of the increasing universal apostasy from God's truth, says that the mind of man became reprobate, corrupt, and vicious (Rom. 1:28). Paul combines words like "vanity," "darkened," "alienated," "ignorance" and "blindness" to describe sin's effects on the mind (Eph. 4:17). In the same light, Paul writes strong words to Timothy about "people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth" (1 Tim. 6:5). One of the results of this downward tendency is the pride evident amongst some scholars today. Reason may be

harnessed for the service of evil. Reason may be utilized to hinder revelation, love, reconciliation, truth, faith, hope, etc.

In writing to the Colossian Christians, Paul describes their pre-Christian state - “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind ...” (1:21). The word translated “mind” is *διάνοια* means *spirit, way of thinking and feeling*. It refers to the common daily activity of the rational faculty or simply, the habit of thinking. It does not mean the intellectual pursuit of knowledge. The human mind in its natural, untransformed nature perverts the truth of God. Paul uses the same word (*διάνοια*) in Ephesians 2:3 to affirm that before regeneration, human desires and thoughts were depraved.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul affirmed the limitations of the human mind when dealing with the things of God (1 Cor. 1:18-21; 2:14). These passages attest to more than mere human finiteness. In the Psalms, references are made to the vanity of the thoughts of man (e.g. 94:11). Psalm 14:2-4 is perhaps the most astounding example of this affirmation that people do not naturally understand and seek God. In addition, humanity’s noetic depravity underlies many of Jesus’ statements (Matt. 11:25-27; 16:17; Mk. 4:11-12; Jn. 6:44).

Noesis also is evident in moral degradation. The greater the decline of the moral stature, the more human will strays away from the truth. Similarly, as the moral nature declines the spiritual capacity diminishes, which in turn involves the diminishing of noetic ability (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8-12). Noetic depravity stands behind the fallacious and varied conclusions in matters of philosophy and religion. It is even difficult to find consensus within the university ethos in the field of hermeneutics for example. In addition, there is clear evidence that within the academy and even in the public square there is a form of reasoning that functions without moral constraints.

What can humanity know? How far can we move toward God by reasoning? Faith in God is not alien to the human condition. God has revealed himself to humanity. However, God transcends human understanding. The study of God requires a mind that is disposed to look carefully at language about God, and to use language responsibly in the light of Scripture, tradition, and good moral sense.<sup>28</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius (Areopagite) reminded his readers that the mind was incapable of fully understanding God. Reason without faith is dangerous and so is faith without reason. Theological scholarship must be attempted with an attitude of reverential awe and worship. Oden has put it in

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology* (New York: HarperOne, 1987), 192.

an excellent way: “The goal of the study of God is the delight of knowing God better with our minds, the pleasure of making sense, the joy of understanding and knowing the blessedness of divinity - an incomparably intriguing subject.”<sup>29</sup>

Christians have the benefit of a noetic restoration in Christ. This restoration does not mean complete perfection for that is not possible in this world, but a restoration in such a way that the only remaining limitation is finiteness. The Holy Spirit illuminates a believer’s mind in a very special way to comprehend God’s truth (cf. Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit helps us in our sanctification (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6). We have to play our part by obeying and studying God’s Word (1 Pet. 1:15,16; 1 Thess. 4:3,7; 5:23; Eph. 1:4; 2 Cor. 7:1). Every believer must constantly pray for noetic sanctification.

### **THE WAY FORWARD: SEEKING NOETIC SANCTIFICATION**

Scholarship must aid in the cultivation of epistemological virtues. Virtues are “those habits of seeing, feeling, thinking, and acting that, when exercised in the right ways and at the right times, will enhance one’s prospects of both recognizing, moving toward, and attaining one’s proper end.”<sup>30</sup> Christian virtues, especially the virtue of love enhance deeper communion with God.

In essence, theologians must remember that theology is about prayerfully asking questions. One must be open to answers that do not fit into their preset categories. Theology must encourage a language necessary for the propagation of ideas through an open and just environment. An academic conversation should not limit the discussions to categories of “either-or” which sometimes draw boundaries around the discussions. Sometimes there is a need for “both-and” so that the discourse can lead to wider perspectives, for example, wider denominational or ecumenical conversations.

In the academy there is a need for scholars to properly situate our intellectual desires and to accentuate submission of our intelligence to God. Classic Christian teaching seeks to understand in a reflective and orderly way what God has revealed.<sup>31</sup> The Christian study of God is “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*),<sup>32</sup> and demands an attitude of

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<sup>29</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 193.

<sup>30</sup> Vanhoozer, K. C.G. Bartholomew, D.J. Treier and N.T. Wright. eds. *Dictionary for theological interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005, 838.

<sup>31</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 21.

surrender and humility in the face of truth. God is always prior to our thinking. Robert Wilken notes, “The knowledge of God begins in receptivity, in openness to what is revealed and the willingness to accept what is given.”<sup>33</sup> This does not imply that man is just a spiritual reservoir, as opposed to a spring or fountain of eternal empowerment. It is both a willingness to quench innate capacity and a responsible and ardent search for truth.

There is a need to establish a very strong bond of credibility and personal accountability to foster submission of our intellects. Credibility comes by demonstrating that what we are doing is not prompted by a desire for self-aggrandizement. Scholars must demonstrate that they are doing what they are doing for the sake of the people, not their own selfish materialistic or individualistic interests. Responsible scholarship demands a high level of altruism. Desmond Tutu has this to say:

Be that as it may, I want to say that the good leader, the authentic leader has to have credibility. Nelson Mandela is not the most riveting orator, and yet thousands hang on every word as he addresses huge crowds who flock to hear him. Why? It is because they perceive that he is a great man who has credibility. Because he is believable, people believe in him. There is a consistency between who he is and what he says. He has integrity - the medium is the message.”<sup>34</sup>

We can progress in overcoming noetic depravity by acknowledging three things. The first is that there is sin in our lives and we need God’s help. Secondly, we must acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit in leading us into all truth through the Scriptures, fellowships, pastors, spiritual mentors, etc. And thirdly, there is a need to acknowledge that our thoughts and ideas must be brought into complete obedience to Christ.

### CONCLUSION

We have seen that it is important for Christians, especially those of the academy, to constantly practice intellectual virtues like tolerance, humility and fair-mindedness. Academic institutions such as theological colleges, secular colleges and universities must find a way of fostering these virtues. This will help their graduates to be more intellectually productive and to foster healthy dialogues with various people and ideologies. This might even help foster the church’s quest for a true ecumenical unity. In a society of widespread

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2003), 88.

<sup>34</sup> Desmond Tutu in Boutros Boutros-Ghali, George Bush, Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Desmond Tutu. *Essays on Leadership: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of NY, 1998), 69.

tribalism, nepotism, racism and various “unbendable” ideas, intellectual humility will open people’s minds to the need to live together as a community. Intellectual humility disciplines our minds to acknowledge that true knowledge is gained for the benefit of the community. An intellectual must be someone who converses with others in order to enrich their lives. To this end, Christians, especially those of the academy, must seek noetic sanctification.

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# **Beyond the Centre: A Focus on Some Broader Issues in Theological Education<sup>1</sup>**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Every organization has something that makes up its core existence. The core of a school is teaching and learning. The core of a bank is managing money. The core of a farm is producing food. What is the core of a theological institution? It includes three basic things:

- Instruction in Bible and Theology
- Training in Ministry
- Spiritual Formation

It is the goal of every seminary, Bible college and other Christian training institution to help future Christian leaders to be more precise and accurate in their understanding and teaching of Biblical theology, more successful in their roles as pastors, teachers, evangelists, counselors, administrators, mentors, and communicators of vision, and to do all of this with a warm heart.

Regardless of how advanced an athlete becomes, his coach continues to focus on the basics. An athlete never gets to the point that he or she can ignore the basics and only focus on the more advanced things. In a similar way, in theological education, we must continue to focus on the basics. Preparing people to be thoughtful, practical and godly leaders is the heart and centre of our theological institutions. Although our seminaries and Bible colleges and missionary training institutions do many things, instruction in Bible and theology that leads to personal and professional development must always be the primary focus.

However, these three are not the only issues that are important in our theological institutions. There are other things that theological educators do

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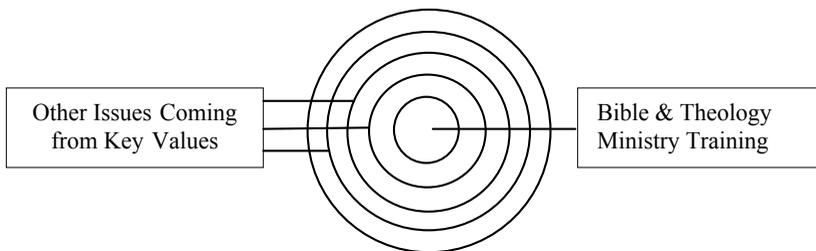
<sup>1</sup> Originally presented at the *Theological Education in Africa Conference* held in June 2008 in Jos, Nigeria.

and therefore must be concerned about. These may be considered more peripheral issues but they have a direct bearing on the fundamental purposes of our institutions.

It probably could be argued that the core responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens. However, a government might be very successful in protecting its citizens but still be considered a failure if it did not fulfill certain other responsibilities. Governments must provide infrastructure; they must provide opportunities for development; they must provide justice for their citizens. Of course, if a government had to make a choice between protecting its citizens from armed robbers or building better roads, it would rightly choose to protect its citizens. However, to the extent that a government neglects the needs of infrastructure and ignores the needs of its citizens for food and justice and opportunities, to that extent that government has failed in its responsibility even though those issues are not the highest priority of a nation.

In a similar way, there are other issues or challenges besides theological instruction, ministry training and spiritual formation that our theological institutions must be concerned about. These are reflected by the principles or values related to what we do. In fact, many of these issues are directly related to the core responsibility of the institutions. However, they are things that often go beyond the matters on which we theological educators tend to focus our attention.

In this presentation I would like to focus on some of those issues that radiate out from that centre of our core responsibilities. These are primarily values that relate to our overall mission but are perhaps not the heart and center of our focus. These challenges have practical issues associated with them and it is primarily those practical values that I want to address.



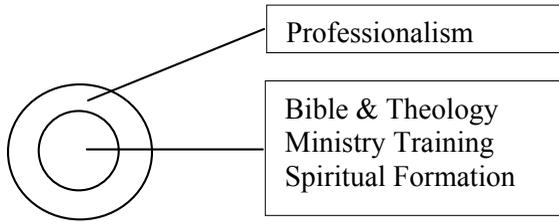
What are those issues and values that radiate from the core duties of theological institutions?

### **THE CHALLENGE OF PROFESSIONALISM**

Here is a fairly typical scenario in Africa, or perhaps I should say a commonly perceived scenario. An intelligent and successful businessman or academic is “born again.” Because he has excellent leadership and communication abilities, after two years he starts his own church. He has some moderate success, and in two more years he starts his first branch. After planting ten or fifteen branches, he starts his own Bible college to train more workers for the kingdom. He declares himself to be the bishop over his churches and obviously becomes the president of his Bible college. Only eight years after becoming a true believer and with no professional theological training, he becomes the chairman of the coalition of Christian denominations and the *de facto* leader of the Christian church in that area.

This is a scenario that annoys many of us who have gone to school for many years trying to learn how to interpret the Word of God accurately and how to provide professional ministries in our churches. Although most of us recognize that God can call anyone to become engaged in ministry and does occasionally use people who have not had formal professional theological training, it seems a bit amateurish and even arrogant for these “untrained upstarts” to think that they know enough about the Bible to teach others, much less enough about ministry to create their own Bible colleges.

This is certainly a legitimate concern. We would all agree that Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he said our converts should not be ordained into ministry too hastily (1 Timothy 5:22). However, there is another side to this coin. Many of us have worked hard to be able to “*rightly divide the word of truth.*” We know how to do exegesis; we read Greek; we know the theological vocabulary; we can prepare meaningful sermons; and we can spot theological error. However, we have had no formal training in education or administration. Our teaching techniques are boring and uninspiring. We know little about administration. In fact our teaching and administrative techniques are every bit as amateurish and incompetent as the theological skills of those “untrained preachers” who start their own churches and seminaries. Thus, a part of the focus we must have in theological education is a concentration on professionalism in the non-theological parts of our ministry. Professionalism, therefore, is the first ring outside of the core issues of theological education and ministry training.



## PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Just as it is important to know the truth that will set us free (John 8:32), it is just as important to communicate that truth that sets us free. Unfortunately, we often focus so much on the content that we neglect the methodology. This is not only true in theological education, it is true in education as a whole. Before a teacher can be employed by the ministry of education to teach primary or secondary school students, the teacher must have evidence of professional training. Amazingly, in the university a person can be employed to teach the future teachers with no professional training. For example, I would guess that less than 25 percent of the lecturers at the University of Jos have any kind of professional teacher training.

However, the fact that this is practiced widely does not excuse us from our responsibility to become the best and most professionally trained teachers that we can be. In fact, our public universities are waking up to this weakness. Some universities are now requiring at least a post-graduate diploma in education before it will employ a person as a lecturer. In addition, the University of Jos is now considering developing a specialty in tertiary-level educational training. The following are three specific areas related to methodology that we as theological educators need to focus upon.

### *Professional Understanding of Learning*

Do you realize that not everyone learns the same way? Some of us learn best from lectures; others learn best from interacting with others; others learn best from hands-on activities. Robert Thompson was a missionary lecturer in Nigeria for several years. He wrote a little book entitled *The Art and Practice of Teaching* while he was here. It has one chapter that talks about the four ways people learn that is worth the price of the book.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Robert Thompson, *The Art and Practice of Teaching*, Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 2000. pp. 21-35. These four types of learners are: 1) the dynamic activist; 2)

### ***Professional Understanding of Teaching***

Most of us use the lecture method in our teaching because that is the one we are most familiar with and, in some ways, this is the most efficient way to communicate large amounts of material. However, lecturing is not the most effective form of teaching. There are other methods that will help to drive the lesson home even more effectively than lecturing. There are two observations about methodology that specifically need stress.

First, every teacher should vary the methods that he or she uses in the classroom. Prof. J. A. Ilori says that in every class period, a good teacher should use at least three different methods.<sup>3</sup> This is not the place to outline all of the possible methods one can use in the classroom. There are good books that can help you develop multiple teaching methods. However, professionalism in education means you must use multiple methods in every class.

Second, every lecturer should use methods that he or she is comfortable using. David could not wear Saul's armor. Few people can teach exactly like their favorite teachers. You must find out the methods that you are most comfortable with and learn how to use them very well. In preparing your class presentations, keep these principles in mind:

- Preparation
- Variation
- Participation

### ***Professional Understanding of Modern Tools***

**Computers.** Our modern world has developed many new tools for teaching and learning. That means that as the modern world comes to our communities, we are going to have to learn to use those modern tools. Computers have changed the way we teach and learn. Many if not most

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the imaginative reflector; 3) the analytical theorist; 4) the common sense pragmatist. Thompson suggests that the professional lecturer will provide something for each kind of learner in every presentation. He identifies this as the "learning circle."

<sup>3</sup> See J. A. Ilori, *Principles and Methods of Teaching Christian Religious Education in n Post-Primary Institutions: An African Perspective*. Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 2005. As the title suggests, this book is primarily designed for teaching secondary school students but, in my opinion, 95 percent of it applies to teaching at the tertiary level as well. Prof. Ilori has a very significant chapter on methods in this book, in pp. 149-212. Also see Thompson on "Teaching the Adult," pp. 46-56.

lecturers in theological institutions now either own or have access to computers. Computers enable you to prepare better and organize your presentations. They also enable you to store and retrieve information much better than before.

**Email.** Most western educational institutions now use email to communicate with their students. Lecturers and students communicate with each other by email. Most assignments are now submitted by email. This is coming to Africa. I am now supervising many of my MA and PhD students by having them submit their documents to me by attachment through email. This is also coming to our seminaries. We must not resist it. We must anticipate it and prepare for it and control it or it will eventually control us.

**Internet.** The Internet is a vast resource of materials which our students are gaining more and more access to. The Internet has already started to revolutionize teaching and learning in Africa. Therefore, our students must be guided in their usage of this amazing tool. Perhaps the one thing that has kept us in Africa from matching western theological education in the past has been resources. The Internet is now changing that. Already now or in the near future we will have access to the same information that institutions in the western world have.

**eGranery.** An American Fulbright scholar named Cliff Missen, who served at the University of Jos, has developed a tool that is assisting many universities and other institutions in Africa. It is called eGranery. It is a massive hard disk with millions of articles that can be attached to the institution's library computer system. It is basically available for African institutions for the cost of the hard drive and a training workshop.<sup>4</sup>

**PowerPoint.** Classrooms will never get beyond the use of the blackboard or some variation of it. However, PowerPoint has become a powerful supplement to it. It gives us the opportunity to do so many more things in the classroom. We can prepare our texts in advance and not be restricted to writing on the blackboard. We can show slides and pictures and charts and even videos to our students. Using PowerPoint requires much more time in preparation. However, it yields many positive results. Obviously, there are obstacles that many of us have to overcome here in Africa to be able to consistently use PowerPoint. The primary one in Nigeria of course is stable

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.widernet.org/egranary/>

electricity. However, we must not use the lack of electricity as an excuse to fail to learn how to use this helpful tool.

## **PROFESSIONALISM IN RESEARCH AND WRITING**

I wish to remind you that teaching is only one of the responsibilities of the professional academic. Research is another important part of our responsibilities. I am sure you are aware that in the universities, academics either “publish or perish.” In the early days of my academic career, I resented this practice. I reasoned that some teachers are very good in the classroom but are not very good at doing research or writing. And those lecturers who happened to be good in the classroom but not very good at writing got little recognition. On the other hand, a person may be very good at researching and writing and very poor in the classroom, and that person would be rapidly promoted.

I am still not sure that we have gotten the balance the way it should be. It is certainly true that not every good teacher will be a recognized published scholar. Good classroom teachers are as important as researchers and writers. However, I am now more sympathetic toward the necessity for all academics to attempt to publish peer-reviewed articles. The attempt to publish books and articles has many advantages.

- It encourages you to continue learning.
- It demonstrates that you are a genuine professional.
- It exposes you to the current literature in your field of research.
- It provides you with opportunities to share what you are learning with others.
- It makes you accountable to others in your particular academic discipline.
- It continues to refine and improve your ability to communicate.
- It gives you a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

We in theological education often excuse ourselves that we are so loaded down with teaching and administrative duties that we do not have time to do the necessary research that will produce publishable materials. I am sure that is true to some extent. However, to the extent we do not write and publish, to that extent we will limit our growth in our academic disciplines. I challenge you as individual lecturers to take up the call to publish.

- Keep track of academic issues that you would like to study some day.
- Make sure you are reading theological journal articles and relevant books.

- Make it a goal to publish something in your area of interest at least once per year.
- Do not be embarrassed to give your documents to others for evaluation and editing.

Administrators, I challenge you to use your position to encourage staff to publish. You will do them a favor. You will do their students a favor. You will do your institution a favor. You will do the kingdom of God a favor. Publishing is a mark of professionalism.

### **PROFESSIONALISM IN ADMINISTRATION**

Everything we have said about professionalism with lecturers can be said about administrators. Teaching and administration are two totally different skills. Whether it is good or not, educational institutions tend to reward good teachers by making them administrators. A person who is a brilliant teacher may be a poor administrator. Many if not most of our lecturers in our Bible colleges and seminaries eventually get asked to fulfill various kinds of administrative responsibilities. When your time for administration comes, I challenge you to approach it in the most professional manner.

I will not take time in this paper to talk about the qualities of a professional administrator. However, I would like to underscore two brief points.

#### ***Be more conscientious of time.***

If 20 people wait 30 minutes for a meeting to start, that is 10 human hours that have been wasted. I have said over the years, “If you steal my computer, I will get another one; even if you steal my vehicle, by the grace of God, I will get another one. But if you steal my time, no one will ever be able to repay any of my time to me.” J. K. Opadiran, acting director of Studies at the Nigerian Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) came to our university and gave a lecture on strategic planning. He spontaneously quoted someone who made this statement: “Until Africans develop a better appreciation for time and numbers, there can be no evaluation and without evaluation, there can be little progress.”

#### ***Provide more formal and professional administrative training.***

Just as certainly as we are annoyed by businessmen becoming “theologians” without professional training, our constituents often become annoyed at theologians who become “administrators” without professional

training. I believe that this is a legitimate concern. How can our theological institutions overcome this problem?

- Administrators need to read books and articles on administration.
- Administrators need to attend workshops and seminars on administration.
- Administrators may need to enroll in professional courses on administration.
- Administrators need to bring people into the administration who have professional training in administration and they need to listen to their advice.

Remember, there is no shame in recognizing that you are not an expert in everything and seeking to become more professional in your area of responsibility.

### **PROFESSIONALISM IN ON-GOING LEARNING**

One of the wonderful things about education is that it is among the most enjoyable things you can do. Proverbs 25:2 says, “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.*” Even a king cannot do anything greater than search out and discover truth. And one of the good things about education is that it is a life-long process. We do not have to stop learning when we complete our formal education. And one of the good things about being an academic is that we continue to learn during our entire careers. Or at least we should continue to learn. Of all the people in the world, we who are academics should be the ones who continue to learn and grow. There are two applications I want to make to this point.

#### ***Theological educators must continue to learn.***

If we are to serve our modern generation, we must continue to grow and learn along with our students.

- We do this through reading books and journals.
- We do this through attending conferences and workshops.
- We do this through serious discussions with our friends and colleagues.
- We do this through regularly updating our notes and other teaching materials.

I challenge our theological academics to make sure that you are continuing to learn and grow academically. I challenge the administrators of our

theological institutions to make sure your staff are growing academically and that you budget for it accordingly.

***Theological institutions must provide in-service training for people in the field.***

One of the growing convictions I have is that the theological institution has not completed its task when it graduates its students. I believe that our theological institutions must create projects and programmes that will stimulate and challenge their alumni and other Christian leaders. I recognize that most of our theological institutions are already doing more than they can do. However, we must develop a vision that having a professional cadre of Christian leaders means that there must be on-going professional training and interaction. What are the best organizations to provide that kind of training? I am convinced that they are our seminaries and Bible colleges. The leaders of our theological institutions must think seriously about the best ways that we can address the needs of our constituents in the field.

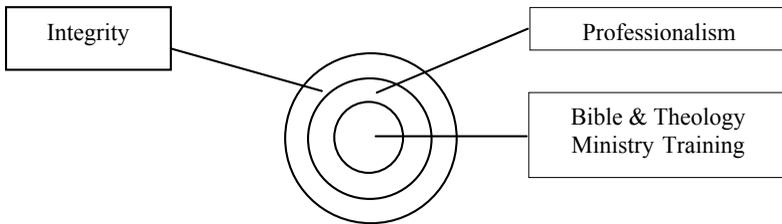
Paul gave two powerful statements only six verses apart in Colossians 3.

- 3:17: *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*
- 3:23: *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”*

These verses demand professionalism of us. Every lecture we prepare, every examination we mark, every project we supervise, every article we write, every meeting we chair must be done with Jesus’ name on it and also done with all of our hearts. Let us be professionals. Let us be people of excellence. Let us be a *“workman who does not need to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15) in the fulfillment of our responsibilities.

### **THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRITY**

Equally as important as the challenge of professionalism and perhaps a part of it is the challenge of integrity. Jesus said, *“you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”* We who are teachers of the truth must also be models of the truth. I will not attempt to define integrity at this point. Everyone reading this article knows what integrity is. I will simply focus a bit on integrity as it relates to theological education.



## INTEGRITY IN FINANCIAL POLICIES

Our African theological institutions have at times been a reflection of the society at large - where administrators view the resources of the institution as their own to use as they see fit. To avoid the problems of the society at large, we must develop professional means of budgeting, accounting and auditing.

- We must resist the temptation to use money simply because it is there.
- We must understand that it is unethical to use money that has been given for one purpose for another purpose.
- We must be transparent in our financial policies and practices.

These things are certainly known and understood so I will not say more about this.

## INTEGRITY IN ADMISSION POLICIES

Every theological institution has policies and guidelines for admission. These are usually worked out in advance - in the non-emotional atmosphere of planning sessions rather than the highly charged atmosphere of implementation. Seminary administrators must be consistent and disciplined in following the recognized admission policies. Obviously, administrators at times have the right to waive certain requirements and that right should not be taken from them. However, when these admission policies are waved along ethnic and tribal lines, or there is any hint that these have been done in some kind of improper way, this becomes unethical. Remember that you will lose your reputation as a person of integrity very quickly if you become inconsistent in admission policies.

## INTEGRITY IN PROMOTION POLICIES

There is no sin in having various levels of employees and rewarding those who excel. Paul said, *“Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor”* (Romans 13:7). Paul was primarily writing to encourage the Roman Christians

to have proper attitudes toward their government officials. However, the application of giving proper respect to those to whom it is due goes beyond that.

Because of this, most institutions, including theological institutions, have policies about the advancement and promotion of its staff. I challenge all administrators to make sure that there are objective written criteria to be followed when considering promotions. Obviously the administrator knows more about the staff than the various staff members know, but the promotion process should be as transparent and straightforward as possible. This will encourage people to strive hard for those promotions and will reduce the jealousy and gossip and friction in the staff.

### **INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS**

Many people have spoiled their reputations through improper relationships with the opposite sex. Sometimes we attempt to excuse our sinful behaviour by comparing ourselves with the imperfect characters in the Bible. I recently heard of a major Christian leader who was confronted about his sexual sins. He was told that this was inconsistent with the example of Jesus. This man responded, "I cannot be a leader like Jesus but I can be a leader like David so I am trying to be a leader like David." Because David had moral failures in his life, this Christian leader felt that he could be excused for moral failures in his life. When we have improper relationships with students or colleagues or others, we are undermining our spiritual authority and making ourselves vulnerable to discipline and God's judgment.

### **INTEGRITY IN TITLE USAGES**

We love titles in Africa. We love the recognition that comes from them. Because of that, sometimes we are tempted to take shortcuts and acquire titles we really do not deserve.

- If you are not ordained, do not call yourself "Reverend."
- If you have not earned a doctorate, do not identify yourself as "Doctor."
- If you have not earned academic degrees, do not place those letters behind your name.

It is unethical, dishonest and a compromise of your testimony to use academic titles that have specific connotations and imply certain accomplishments when you have not achieved those accomplishments.

## INTEGRITY IN DOCUMENTATION

Every institution has a specific method of documentation. For example, the Faculty of Arts at the University of Jos uses the MLA method. I would encourage every theological institution to make sure it has selected a standard way of documentation and then make sure that all students and staff use that method.

Even more important, make sure that you and your students properly document your sources. To do otherwise is plagiarism which is an academic crime. With the growing availability of the Internet, one of the biggest problems now facing the University of Jos is plagiarism. Some plagiarism occurs because students do not understand research and documentation and think that copying the work of others is academic research. However, most people who practice plagiarism understand that they are doing wrong. I will resist the temptation of narrating here the sad experiences of plagiarism that I have experienced at the University of Jos, even from senior church leaders who are PhD students in Biblical studies. However, plagiarism will get students expelled from the University of Jos and it will get lecturers dismissed. Therefore, I urge academic staff to take proper documentation seriously.

- Make sure you understand exactly what plagiarism is.
- Teach what plagiarism is to your students and then continually remind them.
- Read projects carefully to discover cases of plagiarism.
- Make a lot of noise about plagiarism so that your students and colleagues will understand the seriousness of it.

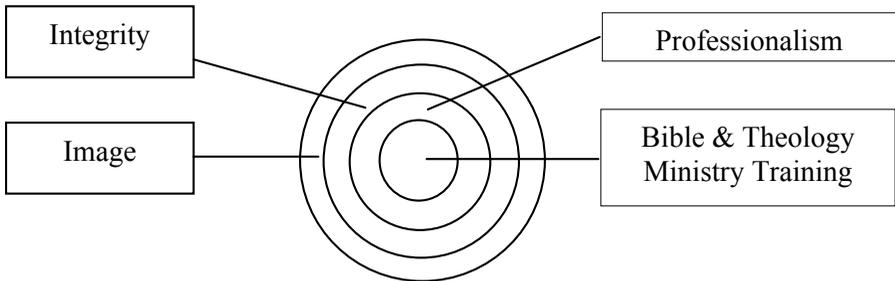
## THE CHALLENGE OF IMAGE

God knows who we are. We think we know who we are. However, to other people, we are what they think we are. It has often been said that in many ways perception is more important than reality. All of us have helped to create a specific image and that is the way people think of us.

It is my conviction that Christian leaders must work harder and be more deliberate in cultivating an image of integrity and respect. Proverbs 22:1 says, *“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”* Immediately after Pentecost, Luke states that the Christian believers enjoyed *“the favor of all the people”* (Acts 2:47). It should be our goal to be like Titus who was *“praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel”* (2 Corinthians 8:18) and Demetrius who was *“well*

*spoken of by everyone*” (3 John 12). A positive image in the community or within your circle of influence enhances your ability to accomplish your goals. It also provides a positive example to those who are learning to do what you are doing.

How do we create a positive public image in our seminaries and other theological institutions? One of the key ways we do this is through ceremonies. As a general rule, we do a good job with our ceremonies. We understand the protocol and the academic liturgies and we know where to get and how to use the appropriate academic regalia. Our academic celebrations are usually very positive events that help to generate goodwill and a positive image. However, are there other ways that we can improve our public image? I am convinced that there are a number of ways we can do so. And the focus on improving our image creates a third circle of values or challenges surrounding our core responsibilities.



## **CAMPUS BEAUTIFICATION**

God is a God of beauty and order. Simply look around you. God has made our world with beautiful colors and shapes. It is filled with variation and contrast. Although God has made the world to be very beautiful, we human beings have often made it to be very ugly.

There are several Biblical words related to “beauty” such as “glory” and “radiance.” In comparing the husband-wife relationship to Jesus’ relationship to the church, Paul said:

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant*

*church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

God wants the church and the various parts of it, including those involved in theological education to be “*radiant . . . without stain or wrinkle or blemish.*” Obviously the first application of this verse is to moral and spiritual beauty and purity. However, the metaphor itself presumes beauty and cleanliness and wholesomeness.

One of the first responsibilities God gave to the human race was to take care of the environment (Genesis 1:26, 28). How well have our seminaries and Bible colleges done that? I do not believe that we should needlessly waste money on exotic things and become extravagant and gaudy. However, there are many things that we can do to beautify our campuses and insure that they are a positive testimony to Christ:

- Make sure that the campus is immaculately clean.
- Plant more flowers and shrubs and trees.
- Provide proper places to discard waste.
- Keep the offices dusted properly.
- Encourage a maintenance culture on your campus.
- Create a sense of wholesome pride in caring for the campus.

My challenge is that the campuses of our theological institutions should be the most beautiful places in our communities, so that visitors feel refreshed and challenged when they visit our campuses.

## **PROFESSIONAL DRESS**

The clothes that we wear reflect something about us. They can tell whether we are clean people, neat people, extravagant people, proud people, sloppy people, casual people, serious people and many other things. I would encourage our seminaries to pay more attention to the clothes that our staff and students wear. We should not do this from a spirit of legalism or elitism but from a spirit of professionalism.

When ancient scribes copied the sacred scriptures, they did so in full rabbinical regalia. They were not casual about the Holy Scriptures. Those of us who teach the word of God and prepare others to teach the word of God should not be casual about it either.

It is my observation that Africans have traditionally been more formal in dressing than people from the western world and particularly Americans.

Unfortunately, the western influence seems to be having more influence on Africans and promoting more informality.

The way we dress says something about the way we view ourselves. In addition, the way we dress helps to create the image that others have of us. When I go to the University senate, nearly everyone there is dressed formally. If academics in our secular institutions believe that it is necessary to dress well, how much more should we who represent God and His word, dress appropriate for our positions?

## **AFFILIATION AND ACCREDITATION ISSUES**

One of the issues that affects the image of any institution is the idea of accreditation or affiliation. Although there are other significant reasons for a theological institution to consider affiliation or accreditation, one of the most important is that affiliation helps to give credibility to an institution. It tells the public that there is some professional body that is looking over the shoulder of the institution to demand certain standards of performance and professionalism. Affiliation or accreditation is an ongoing public affirmation of the school.

The continent-wide evangelical body that accredits organizations in Africa is the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA).<sup>5</sup> This is the only evangelical continent-wide theological body that helps to guarantee standards of excellence in a theological institution.

A second approach to authenticate the genuineness of the education is through affiliation with a university. In some countries, such as Nigeria, historically it has only been the university that could grant degrees. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> There are several ways that one can relate to ACTEA. These include:

- **Correspondent Status.** This means that the institution is loosely connected to ACTEA and has the right to receive mails, attend conferences and enjoy other general benefits.
- **Candidate Status.** This means the institution has actually started the accreditation process and is doing the required self-study that is a prerequisite to accreditation.
- **Accreditation Status.** This means that the institution has met the minimum requirements of ACTEA and is a full member with all of the rights and privileges associated with the agency.

In addition, there are three levels of accreditation: secondary, post-secondary, and post-graduate. ACTEA also affiliates TEE programmes. See <http://www.theoledafrica.org/ACTEA/Default.asp>

any body that wanted to grant a degree was required to affiliate with a university. The affiliation process functions much like the accreditation process. It involves a needs assessment and a process of addressing those needs before affiliation can be granted. Some institutions have chosen both accreditation and affiliation.

There are many advantages to accreditation and affiliation:

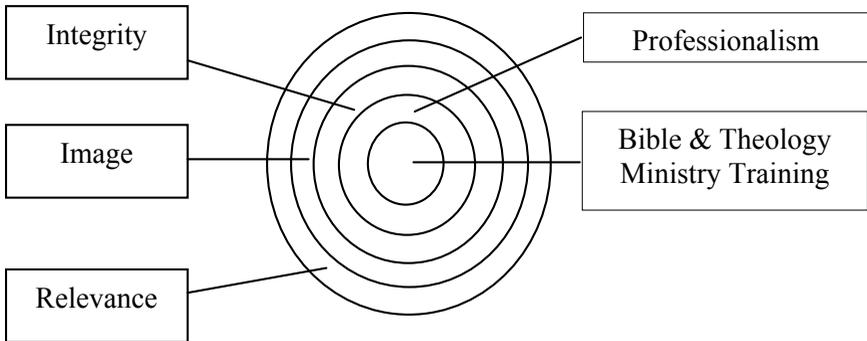
- They help to guarantee a relatively uniform standard of education.
- They provide opportunities for the institutions to be accountable to others.
- They give students an opportunity to go to institutions that recognize the affiliation or accreditation.
- They enable students to be hired by government institutions and other employers who only recognize accredited degrees.

Perhaps the most important advantage of affiliation with a public university is the public relations value that the organization gets from it. In most of our societies, the university is viewed as the grandfather of all education. Therefore, having a link to that institution always is an advantage. It is true that sometimes the affiliated institution is actually doing a better job in theological education than the affiliating institution. However, from the community's point of view, it is the university, despite all of its shortcomings, that has the prestige and, by association, grants some of that prestige to those bodies affiliated with it.

Perception is an important part of influence which is an important part of success. Our theological institutions must make every effort to be viewed as professional agencies.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF RELEVANCE**

Theological training must be more than just the accumulation of information, the sharpening of skills and personal spiritual development. It must be designed to address the real needs of the people whom the student will some day serve. Although learning has value in itself, the learning that takes places in our seminaries and Bible colleges has a specific focus and a specific objective. The objective is to prepare Christian leaders who will serve the body of Christ at local, community, national and international levels. Therefore, it is the idea of relevance that is the fourth ring that emanates out from the center of theological education.



It is commonly said that our armies are always preparing to fight yesterday's wars. I suspect that is sometimes true with education as well. We teachers often teach the issues that we were taught and things that we experienced in our earlier lives. That is usually a good starting place but we cannot limit ourselves to those things. We must be prepared to be the salt and light of today's world and we must prepare our students for tomorrow's world.

What are some of the issues that we need to prepare our students for?

- **HIV/AIDS.** During the last 30 years, our world and particularly Africa has been devastated by the major health crisis spawned by AIDS. Though AIDS is a disease, it has implications that go far beyond the medical community. And because the minister of the gospel must deal with the whole society, he or she must understand and be prepared to deal with this phenomenon.
- **Corruption.** Because corruption is such an endemic part of society, we must understand it from a theological and a cultural point of view. Our future pastors must know how to help people who have been infected and affected by this social disease. They must design and implement programmes that will inoculate children of their churches against corruption. They must know how to hold their members accountable and be a prophetic voice to the community on such matters.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In 1997, the Congress on Christian Ethics in Nigeria (COCEN) produced a document called "The Nigeria Covenant." This is a 10-paragraph document that states what Christians believe about ethics and integrity, especially in public life. Later, a related body known as Covenant Keepers published a *Nigerian Covenant Study Guide* that created 22 Bible study lessons based on the Nigeria Covenant. Several seminaries in

- **Governance.** The missionaries who planted the church in Africa did not often encourage their converts to participate in the political process. Therefore, politics and governance have been taken over largely by people who do not have a Christian worldview. Our church leaders must have a healthy understanding of politics and governance so they can properly advise and support those Christians in their congregations about their responsibilities to participate in the political process.<sup>7</sup>
- **Violence.** The African church has suffered enormous violence from its beginning to the present. How should Christians and Christian leaders respond to violence? If we do not teach and train our young pastors in the best ways to respond to violence, they will react in the way their communities have taught them to react. And those reactions will probably not be godly responses. Martin Luther King Jr. led the non-violent civil rights movement in the United States. A major part of his ministry was teaching those who participated about how to respond to police brutality and mob reactions. Because they were well trained, they responded accordingly. Our church members need similar training, but they will not likely be trained unless their pastors train them. And their pastors will not know how to train their members unless someone trains the pastors.
- **Pornography.** Unfortunately, more and more pornography and sexually explicit materials and videos are coming into Africa. The Internet is especially feeding this phenomenon. Our future pastors and church leaders must be well prepared to personally overcome the temptation toward these things. In addition, our pastors must know how to help their members avoid it and help people who have become addicted to it to be delivered.

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Nigeria have used this document in various ways to prepare their staff and students for how to respond to various social and ethical problems in the society.

<sup>7</sup> In 2007, the Nigeria chapter of the Africa Forum on Religion and Governance (AFREG) produced a four-paragraph document entitled “Nigeria Christian Creed on Governance.” This document outlines the Christian’s belief about what God expects of those who govern and those who are governed. It has become an official document of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). AFREG has also created four Bible studies based upon the four paragraphs of the creed and these are contained in a document entitled *Nigeria Christian Creed on Governance Study Guide*.

- **Secularism.** Most African nations are emerging democracies. One of the issues that democracies must deal with is the issue of religion in politics and particularly the role of the minority religions. I am convinced that the secularism as practiced in the United States and most other western nations is not ideal for Africa. I, therefore, encourage our Christian leaders to work out a common consensus on the concept of secularism and pluralism and make sure that we teach these things to our young pastors so that they will be prepared for these issues when they come up in their ministries and also so that our Christian leaders will speak with one voice on these things.
- **Environment.** One of the first and clearest instructions that God gave to humanity was to care for the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). Unfortunately, Christian leaders have often failed to realize our responsibility in this matter. We must train our young pastors to be sensitive about environmental issues and teach their people to care for the earth that God has given to us. We must oppose pollution and wasting natural resources and abusing the physical environment with the same enthusiasm and commitment we oppose the moral pollution that destroys our souls.

There are many other social problems the church is and will face including poverty, prostitution, abortion, child slavery, unhealthy living conditions, improper employment practices, prisoner rehabilitation, and justice for widows.

I believe that there are two responses to the issue of relevance. First, we as individuals must make sure that we keep ourselves relevant. We should read newspapers and news magazines. We should attend community meetings where social issues are discussed. We should visit our elected officials. We should discuss relevant social issues with our friends and colleagues.

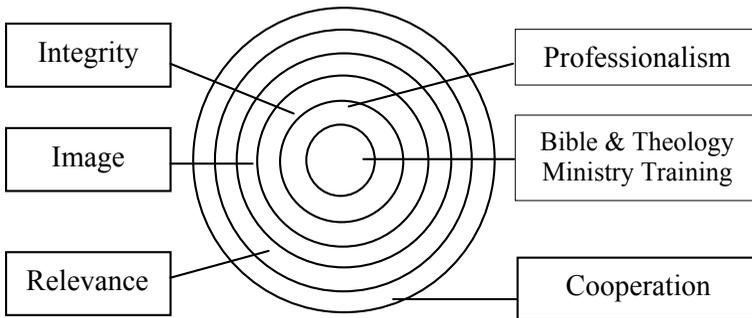
Second, I believe that each of our seminaries and other Christian leadership training institutions must develop at least one course on “Ministering to Contemporary Issues.” It is likely that such a course would need to be team taught. It is also likely that this would be the kind of course in which many resource persons would be brought in from the outside to teach our future pastors about these issues and the best way to respond to them.

It is only as we address the relevant needs of our contemporary society that we will gain the respect of the society. We must remember that salvation

is not just forgiveness of sins and preparation for heaven. It is the complete restoration of a world to become what God originally designed it to be. We as ministers of the gospel and theological educators are called to fulfill that responsibility.

## THE CHALLENGE OF COOPERATION

One of Jesus' most important messages was a stress on the unity of the body of Christ. Of course, there is also diversity. There was diversity among the twelve disciples. There has been diversity all throughout church history. However, Jesus anticipated that diversity and on his last night on this earth prayed to the Father that all of his followers "*may be one*" (John 17:11, 21, 22). Therefore the last of the ever-widening circles that we will consider in this paper is the challenge of cooperation.



In the early days of missionary work in Africa, there were summits in which missionary organizations met together but the extent of their cooperation was to divide up various portions of Africa and agree to focus on those individual areas. We are now far beyond the stage of one mission or one church being restricted to one geographical area. However, we are not beyond the need for cooperation. What are some of the areas of cooperation?

## SHARING STAFF

Two of the key principles of the New Testament are to "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matthew 19:19) and "*honor one another above yourselves*" (Romans 12:10). We have stressed these principles as they relate to us as individuals but do they also have an application to our institutions as well? If one seminary has a specialist in a very narrow field, such as patristic studies, should not the institution that employs that person be generous in allowing that person to assist other institutions?

- If one seminary has someone good in electronic record keeping, let that person teach others.
- If one seminary has someone good at internet research, let that person develop workshops for sister organizations.
- If one seminary has someone good at understanding plagiarism, let other institutions benefit from that person.

One of the phenomenon that has been developing in the last ten or fifteen years is the growing example of the modular style of theological education. Institutions created in recent years, such as Evangel Theological Seminary in Jos and West Africa Theological Seminary in Lagos, have created their whole programmes around this method of teaching. Even older seminaries like the Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, have moved to using the modular form of instruction, at least in the post-graduate faculty.

Why is the modular form of education so popular? Perhaps the most important reason is that this form of education gives the institution an opportunity to bring in highly qualified staff for a week or two. These staff can teach a full course and make a major contribution to that institution that would not be possible if that lecturer had to be there for a full semester. Therefore, the institution is greatly enriched by borrowing staff. And the staff who go there to lecture for a week or two are also enriched because they are able to interact with different kinds of students in a different environment. With this kind of exposure, their own students and their institutions also benefit.

However, the only way that this modular form of education can exist is if institutions are unselfish in allowing their staff to serve other institutions. Therefore, I appeal to academic staff to accept those invitations whenever they can to assist other institutions. I also appeal to administrators to be gracious and flexible in allowing your staff to be a blessing to other institutions. These practices seem consistent with Jesus' prayer for our unity.

## **SHARING RESOURCES**

It is more difficult to share resources. However, seminaries in the same general area should have inter-loan library relationships and should orient their staffs accordingly. I will note here that sometimes the senior staff understand these things but the junior staff jealously guard the resources of their institutions and are not happy when visitors show up. Other things such as academic regalia, electronic equipment, and, on occasion, transportation vehicles should be shared whenever they are needed. In fact, theological

institutions in the same neighborhood would be wise to jointly purchase and share certain items which are only used once or twice a year.

The seminaries in Jos are a good example of this kind of cooperation. The Theological College of Northern Nigeria has set a good example in joint publishing by allowing non-staff to publish in their journal, *The TCNN Research Bulletin*. Jos ECWA Theological Seminary invited the local seminaries to participate in its recent Byang Kato Memorial Lectureship series with Dr Paul Bowers. Evangel Theological Seminary has allowed its facilities to be used by many other groups.

In addition to loving one another as ourselves, God expects the strong to assist the weak. In Romans 14, Paul outlines the way that Christians who disagree with each other on various issues must respond to each other. He concludes his argument by saying, *“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up”* (Romans 15:1-2). First, I believe that the application of this verse extends to organizations as well as individuals. Second, the way “weak” and “strong” are used in this context would suggest that all of us are weak and strong on different issues. Thus, regardless of who we think the weak and the strong may be, the passage demands a respect and tolerance and even support of those who are different from us. In light of this principle, I believe that older institutions should help the newer ones. Institutions with strong academics should support those with weak academics. Institutions that are highly respected should be willing to mingle with and support and give encouragement and recognition to the less respected ones.

I will add here one final word that may stir the theological waters a bit. Whether one likes it or not, Pentecostalism has made a very powerful impact on Christianity in Africa in the last 30 years. I think it can be argued that Pentecostalism has driven much of the church growth and has also encouraged a more authentic African style of worship in Africa during that period. One of the weaknesses of Pentecostals, known both outside and inside the movement, is the lack of strong theological education. Fortunately, many Pentecostal organizations are now trying to catch up. They are starting and trying to improve their Bible colleges and seminaries. They want help and are reaching out to the older evangelical institutions for assistance and guidance. My challenge to those older non-Pentecostal institutions is that you must not ignore their cries for help.

- Give admission to the Pentecostal academic staff when they apply to your institutions.

- Welcome Pentecostal administrators who come to you for advice.
- Invite Pentecostal institutions to participate in your programmes and celebrations.

Even though some may not agree with Pentecostal theology and practice, it is better to have well-educated Pentecostals who are friends than self-taught Pentecostals who are isolated from the rest of the body of Christ and are giving a warped and twisted form of theological education. And by lending a helping hand to your Pentecostal brothers in theological education, your institution might actually learn one or two things also.

### **CONCLUSION**

No one questions that the central focus of theological education is building theology from the Bible, training for Christian ministry and encouraging spiritual formation. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate, there are other factors that directly influence the achievement of these goals. It is our responsibility to focus on the centre without ignoring such broader issues. It is our privilege to provide balanced, practical and meaningful training for our future Christian leaders. It is our confidence that, doing so, our efforts will not be in vain and that our students will see a greater development of God's kingdom on this earth than we have seen.

# **ABORTION TECHNOLOGY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: A CHRISTIAN BIOETHICAL APPRAISAL**

**BY**

**EMEKA CHARLES EKEKE**

## **Abstract**

*The issue of overpopulation has been a problem to many generations of scientists and political economists. Many countries have employed various means to tackle it but it has refused to abate, giving rise to increased poverty, unemployment and an economic downturn worldwide. Some of the technologies employed by many governments to control birth are the use of contraception, abortion and other family planning methods. This paper examines the technology of abortion as a means of population control from a Christian point of view, appraising it bio-ethically. It is suggested, among other things, that human life begins at conception. Therefore the unborn should be preserved until birth.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The debate on the technology of abortion has been a long-standing one among ethicists, religious people and various legislatures and their judiciaries around the world. It has remained one of the bioethical issues that many societies will be grappling with for generations to come. This is because it involves the cardinal issues of life and death. Today, many countries of the world have legalized abortion so that in some countries abortion technology has become an industry in which many people are working. Everett gives this example:

I heard an abortionist testify under oath in San Diego in a Court of Law that he worked eighteen hours a week, did 150 abortions a week. According to my math, the minimum that abortionist could make is \$45,000 a month. That man testified he was paid in cash at the end of the day – no Form 1099, no W-2 form. That's what abortion is about! A part-time job, working 18hours a week, making \$45,000 a month cash- I'm sure they reported all of that to the IRS! (Everett, 1995: 62-63).

In the United States, for example, people can perform as many as 40,000 abortions a year showing that all the wars in the world have not been able to

kill as many people as have been killed by the abortion industry worldwide. In the United States, the Supreme Court ruled that capital punishment was an extraordinary and cruel punishment (*Furman V. Georgia*, 1972: 238). But this same Supreme Court, in one of the cruelest of its rulings declared concerning abortion:

1. Until a developing baby is “viable” or capable of meaningful life”, a state has no “compelling interest” which justifies it in restricting abortion in any way in favour of the foetus. For six or seven months the foetus is denied the protection of law explicit in either the 9<sup>th</sup> or the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments.

2. Even after viability has been reached, the developing baby is not a person “in the whole sense” so even after viability the growing baby is not protected by the guarantee that .... Life shall not be taken without due process of law.

3. A state may not protect a viable human being by preventing an abortion undertaken to preserve the health of the mother. By this statement, a foetus as old as nine months, that is just before delivery, is placed in a position, by this decision, of having his right to life subordinated to the demand for abortion predicated on health (grounds)...(From *Koop*, 1976: 37, 38).

*Koop* (1976:38) further explains that Justice Blackmun who wrote the majority opinion of the Supreme Court ruling in January of 1973, made it “abundantly clear that if any religion was to be a guide to him it would be ‘Paganism’”. *Harris* (1985:157-173) takes time to argue in favour of abortion claiming that the embryo or the foetus has no value and so should be aborted at will.

### **WHAT IS ABORTION?**

*Shields* (2004:237) defined abortion as “the deliberate and artificially induced removal of an embryo or a foetus from the womb”. *Dzurgba* (2005:37) sees abortion as a “willful decision to terminate the development of a pregnancy through an operation which kills the foetus and removes it from the woman’s body or the baby is killed, but allowed to be born dead”. *Wikipedia*, (2008:1), defines abortion as, “the termination of a pregnancy by the removal or expulsion of an embryo or foetus from the uterus, resulting in or caused by its death”. This encyclopedia explains that the term “abortion” commonly refers to the induced abortion of a human pregnancy, while spontaneous abortions are usually termed miscarriages. *Barcalow* (1994:229-230) sees abortion as a technology which involves a surgical operation, infection, drugs and other such procedures or techniques, used in removing the

foetus or the embryo out of the body of the woman. In advanced countries, abortions are carried out in hospitals and designated clinics but in Africa, abortion can be performed in various places ranging from homes, patent medicine stores, clinics, medical centers to hospitals.

### MAJOR ABORTION TECHNIQUES

There are four major official ways today through which the technological techniques of abortion could be performed.

1. *D and C (Dilation and Curettage) or Suction Abortion.* D and C is the method that is often used for early abortions when the pregnancy is between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> week. Koop (1976:30) explains that in this method the uterus is approached through the vagina, while the cervix is stretched to permit the insertion of instruments. Hellman and Pritchard (1971) add that the surgeon using his instruments, which has already been inserted into the uterus, then scrapes the wall of the uterus, cutting the baby's body to pieces and scraping the placenta from its attachments on the uterine wall. They stress that bleeding is considerable. An alternate method preferred in United States and Canada is the suction method. Nathanson (1971:99-107) explains that 66 percent of all abortions performed in United States and Canada is done by this method. Koop (1976:30-31) narrates that "a powerful suction is inserted through the open cervix. This tears apart the body of the developing baby and his placenta, sucking them into a jar. These smaller parts of the body are recognizable as arms, legs, head, etc."

2. *Salt Poisoning Abortion:* When a pregnancy is in its second stage, about the sixteenth week, this method is used. The essence of this technological method according to Koop (1976:31) is to avoid the hemorrhaging on the part of the mother which is common if the D and C or suction method is used at this point. During the sixteenth week of pregnancy, fluid would have accumulated in the sac surrounding the baby. Bensen (1974:1092) explains that in this method a long needle is inserted through the mother's abdomen, which enters into the sac surrounding the baby and a solution of concentrated salt is injected into the sac. As the baby breathes and swallows the salt he is poisoned by it. This causes the brain of the child to experience hemorrhage and the outer layer of the body will be burned so that in about an hour the baby dies. About 24 hours later, the mother goes into labour and delivers a dead, shriveled baby.

3. *Hysterectomy:* This method is employed when the pregnancy is up to 24 weeks, approximately 6 months. Peel and Potts (1969:197-198) explain that a hysterectomy is the same as a "CS", ie., Caesarean Section. The only

difference is that while a caesarean section is done with the intension to save both the mother and baby, a hysterectomy is done with the full intension of killing the baby. Concerning babies aborted through a hysterectomy, Koop (1976:31) explains:

These babies look very much like other babies except that they are small, weighing, for example, about two pounds at the end of a twenty-four-week pregnancy. These babies are truly alive and they are allowed to die through neglect or are deliberately killed by a variety of methods.

*4. RU – 486 Method of Abortion.* This method of abortion is very prevalent in France. Willke (1995:66-67) explains that this pill blocks the action of progesterone – a hormone responsible for the thickening and preparation of the lining of the womb for the nesting of a new embryo. This hormone increases when pregnancy occurs until delivery. This pill, therefore, deprives the young baby, between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy, “of this vital nutrient hormone, progesterone, and so this tiny one withers, dies, and is lost, along with the lining of the womb, which is not maintained because of the blocking of this hormone”. Another pill, prostaglandin, is then given to the woman to produce violent contractions of the uterus so that the remains of the embryo is flushed out.

These are the major techniques of abortion today, though there are some unorthodox methods such as the drinking of some traditional concoctions and other unhygienic methods employed by people, especially in Africa.

Having explained the various technologies of abortion available to orthodox medicine today, we now consider factors which many people think make abortion necessary.

### **THE PERCEIVED NECESSITY FOR ABORTION**

Many factors are responsible for making women consider abortion. Bankole, Singh, and Haas (1998:117-127) conducted a study in 27 countries of the world on the reasons women have abortions, especially induced abortion. It was discovered that some of these women cited (1) a desire to delay or end childbearing, (2) concern over the interruption of work or education, (3) issues of financial stability, (4) issues of relationship stability, and (5) perceived immaturity. When Finer, Forhwirth, Dauphinee, Singh and Moore (2005:110-118) did another survey on why American women go for abortions, it was exactly the same as that of Bankole et al (1998) as listed above. Bankole et al

(1998:152) add that it was only in Bangladesh, India and Kenya that women cited health concerns as the reason for abortion. The survey by Finer et al (2005:110-118) explains that only one percent of women in U.S. became pregnant as a result of rape, while 0.5 percent as a result of incest. Cohen (2008:54-65) argues further that in United States most women who go for an abortion are people of colour who “have much higher rates of unintended pregnancy”.

Another reason prevalent among Asian women especially in China, Taiwan, South Korea and India, for abortion is sex selection. The advent of both sonography and amniocentesis, which allow women to determine the sex of the baby before birth, has led to the occurrence of sex-selective abortion or termination of the targeted foetus based upon its sex (Wikipedia...2008 “Abortion” 7). Nowiszewski (1988) has argued that other reasons include ignorance, that is, some of the women claimed that they did not know it was a baby. This is because the doctor called the baby inside her womb “a product of conception” or said, “it’s just a blob of tissue” (16). It may also be as a result of shame, pressure by the mother or boyfriend or deception by the doctor, claiming that the baby was deformed. In some other cases the doctor convinces the woman to have an abortion saying that it is very easy. In another case it may be the pastor of the woman saying to her “...it was up to you” (26). It may even come from the counselor who will argue that abortion is the only solution to teenage pregnancy or unwanted pregnancy (27-28). Whatever reasons one may give concerning the legalization of abortion or the performance of abortion, the truth of the matter is that it is the killing of a human being and God will not count him guiltless who takes life under any guise.

### **BIOETHICAL ISSUES FOR AND AGAINST ABORTION**

Three basic positions exist about abortion. All these centre on the humanness of the unborn baby. Adopting these three positions are three groups who argue for or against the value or lack of value and the humanness or lack of humanness of the embryo or foetus. The first groups are those who see the unborn as “sub-human” and so it could be aborted at will by the mother. The second group views the unborn as “potentially human” and so favour abortion in specified instances such as in the case of incest, rape, and when the health of the mother is threatened. The third and final group are those who see the unborn as “fully human” and so they should be preserved. These groups are known as the pro-life group and so are against abortion.

In all the arguments by proponents and opponents of abortion, the issue is

always the status of the unborn. If the unborn is seen as human, then the law against murder should be applied to abortionists. "On the other hand, if the unborn are merely appendages or extensions of their mother's bodies, then abortion is no more serious than an appendectomy" (Geisler, 1989:136). Geisler (1989:136) argues further that another important issue is that of the relationship between the right to life and the right to privacy. He opines that, "if human life takes precedence over personal privacy then aborting a human fetus on the basis of the right to privacy is unjustified. If on the other hand, the mother's right to privacy takes priority over the baby's right to life, then abortion is justified".

### **THE UNBORN ARE A SUBHUMAN GROUP**

This group, who see the unborn as subhuman, argue that the unborn should be aborted for any reason, supporting their argument by citing Scripture to prove that it is the breathing of air that shows humanness. They cite Genesis 2:7, "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being" (NIV); Job 34:14–15, "if it were his intention and he withdraw his Spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to dust" (NIV); and Isaiah 57: 16 which talks about "the breath of man that I have created". They also include such passages as Ecclesiastes 6:3-5 which says of the stillborn child, "it comes without meaning, it departs in darkness, and in darkness its name is shrouded. Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest...." In the New Testament they cite Matthew 26:24 claiming that Jesus supported abortion by saying that "...it would be better for him if he had not been born". This group claims that life begins after birth when the baby breaths air and concludes that breathing air is the beginning of life.

They also argue that the unborn has no self consciousness and so cannot be a human. They further argue that abortion is the best option for the mother whose physical well-being is placed above that of the foetus because the foetus is dependent on the mother. The safety of the mother is improved when abortions are not done illegally. Abortions avoid abuse of unwanted children and children with genetic deformities. Abortion allows the right of a woman to privacy and to control over her own body. Abortion is also deemed necessary when rape has occurred, in teenage pregnancy, when the mother is not well educated, to restrict family size, as population control and in many other cases.

*An Evaluation of this View:* This group should understand that breath is not the beginning of humanness. David in Psalm 51:5 tells us that human life begins at conception, long before breathing begins (Geisler, 1989:138). Scripture further records that when Mary visited Elizabeth, the baby (John the Baptist) in the womb of Elizabeth leaped for joy showing both life and consciousness of the unborn. Luke writes,

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear... as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy...' (Lk. 1:41-44, NIV).

This passage shows that while in the womb, John the Baptist demonstrated signs of excitement, which his mother understood to be joy. Therefore the passages on breath do not really speak of the beginning of human life but simply of the initial "coming out" event. Geisler (1989:138) adds that people who take this view speak of the "beginning of observable life, not the beginning of life".

Furthermore, self-consciousness is not a sign of humanness. Consider those who are dreaming and those who are comatose. They are unconscious yet they are human. It is also a scientific fact according to Geisler (1989:140) that an embryo is not an extension of the mother. Embryos have sex, limbs, brain, blood type and their own unique fingerprints and so cannot be regarded as an extension of the mother that can be terminated at will.

On the issue of the mother's privacy, which includes her health, education, beauty, concern for overpopulation and restriction of family size, it should be noted that once intercourse is consented to, then any pregnancy becomes a responsibility to be accepted. Geisler (1989:139) suggests:

Abortion is more like killing an indigent person in our home because he will not leave. After all, evicting a non-viable embryo is fatal. It is tantamount to killing it, since it cannot live on its own outside the womb.... If one consents to intercourse, then one is responsible for the result of that free act. So... in 99 percent of abortions the "guest" was invited to begin with. This being the case, abortion is more like inviting an indigent guest to our home and then killing him (or evicting him to a sure death) simply because he is not wanted.

Rape is not a good reason for abortion. We earlier observed from the Finer et al (2005) survey that only one percent of women in United States became

pregnant from rape. If the rape is immediately reported, she will be medically treated and it will not result in pregnancy. But if pregnancy occurs, it is better the baby be born and given up for adoption to those who do not have children, than taking the life of the innocent baby who knows nothing about the problem. Ladies should also be careful of where they go, who they have as friends and the type of dress they wear in order to avoid rape. Ladies should not go through lonely areas late at night.

## **THE UNBORN AS POTENTIALLY HUMAN GROUP**

This second group believes that abortion can sometimes be allowed because the unborn foetus is not a fully developed human but merely a potential human being who is in the process of gradual development into a human. To this group, abortion could be allowed, “to save the mother’s life, for rape, for incest, and (in many cases) for genetic deformities” (Geisler, 1989:142).

This group further argues that since the human personality only develops gradually, one becomes a person when one’s personality fully develops. They also see the physical development between conception and birth as an indication that the foetus, whose organs are not complete at conception, cannot be regarded as fully human but is potentially human until there is complete physical development.

These “abortion-sometimes” proponents have also argued from Scripture to find biblical backing for their stand. They cite such Bible passages as: Romans 5:12, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (NIV); Hebrews 7:9, “one might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham” (NIV); Exodus 21:22-23, “if men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life”; and finally Psalm 139:13, 16, “for you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. Your eyes saw my unformed body.” (NIV)

A careful look at these passages does not in any way suggest that they support the view that the unborn is potentially a human who can be aborted.

*A Brief Evaluation of this View:* There are serious problems with the position of this group. In Exodus 21:22- 23, which they cite, the Bible teaches

that when there is harm it is serious harm. This serious harm has to do with both the baby and the mother. The same punishment is given, “life for life”. This shows that both the unborn and the mother are of equal value before God. Cassuto (1974:275) in his commentary explains the passage (Exodus 21:22-23) thus:

When they strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens – that is, the woman and the children do not die – the one who hurts her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief happens, that is, if the woman dies or the children die, then you shall give life for life.

This commentary explains the meaning more clearly so that one understands that from God’s point of view, the unborn are of equal value to adult human beings.

Though Psalm 51:5 supports the fact that human beings are potential sinners at conception, it does not support the idea that at conception the unborn are potential humans. This passage rather supports the fact that the unborn are fully humans at conception because it is only humans who could be declared sinners.

Psalm 139 is another passage which fully supports the humanness of the foetus. The baby in the womb is referred to as *created*, the same word used for mankind in Genesis 2:27 to denote their being made in the image of God.

Furthermore, this group should carefully understand the difference between personality and personhood. They confuse the two or they conceal the difference between these two terms in order to continue with their blunder. “Personality is a property, but personhood is the substance of being human” (Geisler 1989:146). Personalities are formed by their surroundings, but personhood is created by God. This, then, means that personality is a product of the gradual developmental process, while personhood comes instantly at conception. It is therefore erroneous for this group to confuse personality with personhood. This evaluation points to one single fact that the unborn foetus or embryo is fully human and not simply potentially human.

## **THE UNBORN IS A FULLY HUMAN GROUP**

This is the final group in this ethical debate about abortion. This group consists of those who say ‘No’ to abortion. They hold the view that “any intentional taking of an unborn child’s life is homicide” (Geisler 1989:148). In support of this stand, the group presents many biblical and non-biblical

points to buttress their argument. Geisler (1989:148) has enumerated these biblical points to enforce their argument including:

1. Unborn babies are called “children”, the same word used for infants and young children (Lk. 1:41, 44; 2:12, 16; Ex. 21:22) and sometimes even of adults (1 Kgs. 3:17).
2. The unborn are created by God (Ps. 139:13) just as God created Adam and Eve in his image (Gen. 1:27).
3. The life of the unborn is protected by the same punishment for injury or death (Ex. 2:22, 23), as we explained earlier, as that of an adult (Gen. 9:6).
4. Christ was human (the God-man) from the point he was conceived in Mary’s womb (Matt. 1:20-21, Lk. 1:26-27).
5. The image of God includes ‘male and female’ (Gen. 1:27) but it is a scientific fact that maleness or femaleness (sex) is determined at the moment of conception.
6. Unborn children possess personal characteristics such as sin (Ps. 51:5) and joy that are distinctive of humans (Lk. 1:44).
7. Personal pronouns are used to describe unborn children (Jer. 1:5; Matt. 1:20-21) just like any other human being.
8. The unborn are said to be known intimately and personally by God as he would know any other person (Ps. 139:15-16; Jer. 1:5).
9. The unborn are even called by God to his service before birth (Gen. 25:22-23; Judg. 13:2-7; Isa. 49:1, 5; Gal. 1:15).

A careful study of the above passages reveals that the unborn are fully human like any adult person. The unborn are created in God’s image just like any adult person, therefore their lives should be precious in the sight of their mothers and those medical doctors who have made abortion a business and an industry where they can become millionaires overnight.

From a scientific point of view, it has been proven that the foetus is fully human. In 1981, during the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congressional Hearing on the report to the Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, 1st session, members of the sub-committee argued for the humanness of the foetus. These experts from around the world testified about the beginning of an individual life. Dr Micheline M. Matthe-Roth, himself a member of the committee, explains: “in biology and in medicine, it is an accepted fact that the life of any individual organism

reproducing by sexual reproduction begins at conception or fertilization.” (S-158).

Another member of the committee, Jerome Le-Jeune, a medical expert, said, “To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion. The human nature of a human being from conception to old age is not a metaphysical contention; it is plain experimental evidence.” (S-158).

Furthermore, Dr. Hymie Gordon of the same sub-committee argues in support of the full humanness of the foetus when he said:

But now we can say, unequivocally, that the question of when life begins is no longer a question for theological or philosophical dispute. It is an established scientific fact. Theologians and philosophers may go on to debate the meaning of life or the purpose of life, but it is an established fact that all life, including human life, begins at the moment of conception. (S-158).

These medical experts, speaking on the floor of US congress, have declared that human life begins at conception. Who can say otherwise, from a scientific point of view?

To further support this stand, which this researcher believes, we shall consider the development of the unborn according to Koop (1976:29-30) and Geisler (1989:149-150). These authors, in their separate books, have given the stages and developments of the unborn before birth.

At eighteen to twenty-five days, the heart is already beating, long before the mother realizes she is pregnant. Between forty to forty-five days, brain waves can be detected; the brain, fingerprints, nose, eyes, ears and toes appear. Her blood starts flowing, the skeleton develops and she is sensitive to touch through her lips and her reflexes. All her bodily systems are present and functioning.

By the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> week, the thyroid and the adrenal glands are functioning; the baby can move, squint, swallow, move her tongue, grasp with the hands, suck her thumb, sex hormones are already present, fingernails appear and can recoil from pain. In the fourth month the baby’s weight increases six-fold and she is about eight to ten inches in height. At this time the baby can hear her mother’s heart beat and voice. The fifth month is mainly for the lengthening and strengthening of the baby. The baby is now viable. The skin, hair and nails grow. Sweat glands arise, oil glands excrete, the baby dreams (REM sleep),

she can now cry if there is air and can survive outside the womb but she is only half way to her scheduled birth date. In the sixth month, the baby responds to sound and light. In the seventh month, the nervous system becomes much more complex. The baby has now grown up to sixteen inches long and weighs about three pounds. The eight and ninth months are months of fattening and of continued growth.

From the above description who would say that the unborn is not fully human? It is my understanding that a biologist will easily identify an unborn pig as a pig or an unborn horse as a horse but not identify an unborn human as a human. I think the reason is so that it will not deter them from carrying out their heinous, murderous act against these innocent young humans. The unborn is not a mosquito, which has no consciousness and so can be killed at will (Dzurgba, 2005:42) but a full human being with all that it takes to be human. God created a person, not a sub-person or a potentially human person. Those who think that a foetus can be terminated at an earlier stage because to them it is not viable, or because the foetus is not yet a human, but could not be terminated at a later stage because the foetus has become human, should know that at conception the foetus is fully human (Dzurgba, 2005:40).

### **CONSEQUENCES OF ABORTION**

Abortion can cause serious damage to the reproductive health of a mother. In some cases she may be rendered incapable of having future pregnancies and in others she may be more likely to have miscarriages (spontaneous abortion). Shields (2004:241) adds, “she has a 50 percent higher risk of getting breast cancer before the age of 45 than have other mothers of the same age group”.

The mother may also experience psychological problems as a result of abortion. This can manifest itself in the form of intense grief for the child she never knew. It may also lead to guilt, which may last for many years (Nowiszewski, 1988:77). Illsey and Hall (2006:11-34) corroborate Nowiszewski’s view when they argued that guilt and abortion have become synonymous. No matter what her reason for abortion, the woman will feel guilt to some degree, whether for a few hours immediately after the procedure is performed or for many years. Though some may conquer the grief and guilt, others suffer for a long period of time in “depression and some even develop acute eating disorders” (Shields, 2004: 241).

Many marriages have ended in divorce because of conflict caused by abortion.

Abortion has caused the death of many girls in Nigeria. Many girls and women, who would have been instrumental to the development of Nigeria, have been buried due to their demand for and practice of abortion. In many hospitals in Nigeria, clinics, maternity hospitals, health centers and patent medicine stores, doctors, nurses, midwives and quack practitioners in medicine, whose stock in trade is abortion, have turned from being physicians to murderers and executioners.

### CONCLUSION

It is worthy of note that the Scripture unequivocally condemns the taking of human life whether it be a small or a big human life. Size is not the issue, life is what matters. It is clear that human life begins at conception, develops until birth and continues its development until death. Life is God's creation and whoever terminates it has committed homicide and will not go unpunished by Almighty God.

One may argue in favour of abortion by asking, "What if the mother's life is threatened?" Today, advances in medicine have made things easier, except in developing countries, so that it is only seldom that this option of abortion to save the life of the mother is ever considered. If this becomes the only available option, it is then morally justified that abortion should be allowed. In such circumstances, it should be noted that it would not be rightly called abortion because the intention is not to kill the baby, even when we know the baby will die, but to save the mother's life. It therefore means that it is a life-for-a-life issue, not an abortion on-demand situation. Geisler (1989:152) argues that in such case "when ones life is threatened, as the mother's is, one has a right to preserve on the basis of killing in self- defense" (Exodus 22:2).

In view of the above, it is homicide, murder and a heinous crime to commit abortion for whatever other reason one may give. It is known in history that Adolf Hitler killed about six million Jews in the Holocaust, and the world found him guilty of murder. Charles Taylor of Liberia is standing trial for the mass killing of Liberians in the civil war which ravaged that country. The ethnic cleansing among the Tutsis and Hutus which led to genocide in that area remains indelibly etched in the minds of the world and many of their leaders are standing trial today. But who is facing trial at the World Court in the Hague for the twelve billion babies who were aborted in 2003 alone? Who is facing trial for the countless unborn babies whose heartless mothers and heartless doctors and nurses have killed to maintain the beauty and privacy of their mother in Nigeria and the rest of the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom and France? Who is facing

trial for the genocide and infanticides being experienced today among undergraduates in the various institutions of higher learning who choose to kill in order to maintain their shape and continue their education even though they consented to the sexual intercourse that led to the pregnancy.

Those proponents of abortion should choose to change places with the aborted whose blood is crying every day before God for vengeance. These proponents should know that children are “a heritage from the Lord...[and] a reward from Him” (Ps. 27:3). “They [children] are not disposable assets that can be discarded through abortion before they are even born” (Shields, 2004: 248).

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Femi Adeyemi

### *The New Covenant Torah in Jeremiah and the Law of Christ in Paul*

Studies in Biblical Literature 94. New York: Peter Lang, 2006.  
328 + xix pp., hb. ISBN 0820481378 \$81.22 US

Reviewed by Christopher A. Beetham, PhD.

Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The work is the product of the author's doctoral dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary (Dallas, Texas, USA). Adeyemi served at the time of publication as Visiting Lecturer at the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) Theological Seminary in Igbaja, Nigeria.

The book takes up the issue of Paul and the Law. Its purpose "is to set forth the identity of the law that will be written on the hearts of people at the time of the fulfillment of the New Covenant, as prophesied by Jeremiah and later understood by Paul" (17). The author's thesis is that "the prophet Jeremiah intended the Torah of his New Covenant prophecy to be understood as an eschatological Torah of the Messiah, and that Paul understood Jeremiah's prophecy in the same way, designating the new Torah "the Law of Christ" (18).

Adeyemi argues that the content of the Mosaic *torah* and the promised *torah* of the new covenant are essentially different, thus stressing discontinuity between the two covenants (74). The author's exegesis of Jeremiah 31:31–34, however, is unlikely at three key points, rendering this conclusion doubtful. First, he over-exegetes the pronominal suffix on the Hebrew *torati* ("my law") of v.33, arguing that the suffix implies that the promised *torah* is something new and different that proceeds directly from YHWH himself (pp. 73–74). The pronominal suffix, however, can hardly bear such interpretive weight. Second, despite its regular use throughout the book of Jeremiah to the contrary, the author insists that the word *torah* at v.33 cannot refer to the

Mosaic covenant stipulations enjoined upon Israel but rather to “a new Torah different from the Torah of Moses” (73). The explicit reference to the *Mosaic* covenant in the immediate context, however, makes such a claim appear as special pleading (see v.32). Third, the author rightly sees that the Mosaic covenant and the promised new covenant are to be different, but overly focuses on the grammar of the negative particle that begins v.32 to the neglect of much more obvious contextual considerations. The author asserts that this “negative phrase reiterates that the New Covenant absolutely will be dissimilar to the old order” (65). Immediate context, however, informs the reader as to the differences between the covenants, not the negative particle in and of itself.

Indeed, the stated differences between the two covenants are three. First, the *torah* stipulations will be engraved on human hearts (not on tablets of stone; v.33a). Second, every member of the covenant community will “know” YHWH (not just the faithful remnant within Israel; v.34a). Third, the covenant formula and the right relationship it encapsulates will be finally realized (“I will be their God, and they shall be my people”; v.33c). Additionally, a fourth difference can be inferred in light of context, although it is not stated explicitly. The new covenant, unlike its older Mosaic counterpart, will not be broken (v.32).

Adeyemi is correct to point out that in Ancient Near Eastern covenants, stipulations function within their broader covenant framework, but incorrect to assert that “a covenant cannot be divorced from its stipulation[s]” (73). This ‘impossibility’ is, to the contrary, exactly what Jeremiah 31:33 promises will take place: the *torah* of the failed Mosaic covenant will be brought forward and taken up into the new covenant framework. Dennis McCarthy has pointed out that such a move enjoys ANE precedent (*Treaty and Covenant*, 69 n.64). Not that the Mosaic *torah* will be brought forward unchanged, for as Adeyemi himself brilliantly observes, v.34’s promise of a definitive forgiveness renders superfluous “the procedures for atonement and forgiveness of sin” embedded within the failed older covenant (208). Jeremiah’s oracle contains within itself the seed that will flower into the eventual abolishment of the entire sacrificial system and its attendant priesthood. The *torah* of the new covenant age is therefore a transformed Mosaic *torah* grounded in a definitive atonement that forever redefines that *torah*. The Mosaic covenant comes to an end in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus, but its stipulations are taken up - freed from all “shadows” (Col 2:16–17) - into the new covenant framework. Here they are engraved upon the tablets of the covenant members’ hearts and

energized by the provision of the Spirit (Ezek 36:26–28). It is in the inauguration of Jeremiah’s new covenant that an obedient Israel is finally birthed, which can and will finally fulfill Israel’s vocation to mediate the Abrahamic blessing to the nations (Gen 12:3; Exod 19:4–6).

Against Adeyemi’s complete discontinuity model, I therefore am suggesting an approach that embraces continuity as well as discontinuity. This proposal also makes more sense of several of Paul’s otherwise recalcitrant OT quotations, where the apostle appeals to Mosaic covenant stipulations as relevant authority. The new covenant was not promised because Israel needed a different and better *torah*, but because Israel’s history had demonstrated that the *torah* would never be kept as long as the nation existed ‘in Adam’ with only sin, not *torah*, “engraved upon the tablet of its heart” (Jer 17:1).

Adeyemi’s monograph is a true contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning Paul and the Law. Readers of the review ought not to take criticisms to mean that the work is not a stimulating and substantial read. It is both of these things and more. More than any other work that I have read, save for Scott Hafemann’s *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel*, Adeyemi has established the centrality of Jeremiah 31:31–34 to Paul’s thought concerning the Mosaic Law and the “Law of Christ.” The work deserves to be in theological research libraries both in Africa and abroad.

## *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*

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**Agrippa Goodman Khathide**

***Hidden Powers: Spirits in the First-Century Jewish World, Luke-Acts and in the African Context***

AcadSA Publishing. Kempton Park, South Africa, 2007  
456 pages

<http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-05202005-103502/>

Reviewed by Dr. Erwin van der Meer, Blantyre, Malawi

Dr. Khathide is an ordained minister of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa and the head of department at the Auckland Park Theological Seminary. This publication was originally submitted for a PhD degree at the faculty of Theology, New Testament department at the University of Pretoria.

Khathide addresses an important issue in the African context, namely the felt need for protection against witchcraft and evil spirits. Many Africans feel that the church does not sufficiently address this need and as a result they revert to traditional means for supernatural protection in times of crisis. As Khathide's work is a doctoral thesis it is not an easy read. Nevertheless it is a scholarly work which seriously addresses the problem of the evil supernatural powers from a Biblical and contextual perspective.

The first chapter is a general introduction to the subject and emphasizes the felt needs of Africans which cause them to consult a 'shaman' even when they are confessing Christians. It also includes a brief and somewhat superficial review of the various theories that seek to explain the concept of demon possession. A little more interaction with those who think differently would have given his arguments more weight.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive review of demonology in the Old Testament, the literature of the Inter-Testamental period and of the New Testament era in order to present a better understanding of demonology in the first century Jewish world. While the demonologies of the Old Testament, Inter-Testamental period and the New Testament cannot be

exhaustively discussed within a single doctoral thesis, the main issues surrounding the concept of Satan and the evil spirits in the Old Testament are sufficiently discussed and highlighted. However, Khathide's suggestion of a correlation between Daniel's intercession and angelic powers who influence the destiny of nations (p. 105) is clearly influenced by Khathide's Pentecostal background and does not reflect a proper reading or exegesis of the text in Daniel 10. Chapter two also provides an interesting overview of the various occult practices, mediumistic activities and methods of divination employed in Old Testament times. The section on Inter-Testamental demonology is interesting but overlooks the strong Hellenist influence upon Jewish thought in this period. However, when looking at the New Testament, Khathide provides a very comprehensive study of demons and evil spirits in this period. In his discussion of spiritual warfare from a Pauline perspective he rightly emphasizes that it is a community affair. It is the new community of believers who together stand up against the devil (p. 223) and that the victory of Christ over the powers is visible in the new way of life of the believers (pp. 224-225).

The third chapter focuses specifically on the theology of Luke in Luke-Acts and the conflict between Jesus and his disciples with the demonic and magical world. Khathide highlights important themes in Luke's understanding of Christ and His gospel. Apart from Luke's special attention for the marginalised, Khathide focuses on Luke's theology of Christ, salvation, the church and on his eschatology. In line with the main theme of his book Khathide gives special attention to Luke's demonology and the importance of exorcism in the ministry of Christ. Contrary to recent misinterpretations by proponents of strategic level spiritual warfare of the binding of the strongman Beelzebul by Jesus in the synoptic gospels, Khathide provides a biblically sound and convincing interpretation of the narrative (pp. 279-288). The discussion of the sorcerers Simon Magus and Elymas in Acts as well as Paul in Ephesus is both interesting and relevant in view of the African context. However, the suggestion that Acts 19:18-19 refers to Christians who had continued to practice magic (pp. 306-307) fails to take into consideration that it can just as well refer to people who had just become believers and now broke with their past.

In the fourth chapter Khathide looks at the present African context and how the spirit world is understood and responded to. He interacts with a wide range of African and non-African writers and demonstrates a good understanding of the issues. Contrary to common misconceptions Khathide emphasizes that the Africans normally did not consider the ancestral spirits as

evil spirits (p. 337). Unfortunately Khathide interacts very little with sociological, anthropological and psychological insights (p. 344) which is unfortunate because the issue of witchcraft and magic is not an either-or issue. When it comes to demonic and human factors, there is often an interaction between the two as scripture also indicates. Khathide also looks at some of the African understandings of the devil, demon possession and exorcism. His conclusion that Christian theology should engage more with issues related to the spirit world is certainly valid.

In the fifth and final chapter Khathide pulls all the earlier strands together and provides a critical evaluation of African approaches to the spirit world and magic in the light of the comprehension of Jesus and the early church. In this chapter the demythologizing influence of the Enlightenment and the resultant mechanistic worldview on biblical studies, theology and mission is also discussed (pp. 384-385). Khathide however seems to have overlooked that the African traditional worldview is in essence also mechanistic: If the right spiritual parameters are in place we get the desired outcome. If someone dies or a misfortune befalls the family it is caused by a curse, witchcraft or because something has displeased the ancestral spirits. If the right steps are taken and the right charms are used or the right prescriptions from the 'Shaman' followed the problem will be solved.

The same mechanistic approach to spiritual matters can be discerned in some of the current spiritual warfare theologies within the same Pentecostal tradition from which Khathide comes. Nevertheless, in spite of being appreciative of the Pentecostal approach to demonization Khathide generally avoids the extra-biblical speculation and questionable extrapolations so common in contemporary spiritual warfare literature. On the whole, Khathide's work is an excellent biblical and contextual study by an African Pentecostal scholar who by means of good scholarship and an evangelical hermeneutic convincingly demonstrates the need for further theological reflection on issues related to dealing with the evil supernatural powers in an African context. For anyone involved in ministry or mission in Africa this book is a valuable asset to acquire.

**Barry J. Beitzel**

***The New Moody Atlas of the Bible***

Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009.

ISBN: 978-0-8024-0441-1. 304 pp. US\$ 29.91 (Amazon)

Reviewed by Knut Holter, Dr. Theol.

MHS School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway

The well-known – and much used – *Moody Bible Atlas* has come in a new and significantly revised version; still authored, however, by Dr Barry J. Beitzel, professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, USA. The atlas is now expanded to 300 pages, and in addition to 118 multicolor maps and a large number of photos of landscapes, ruins, and objects related to the maps, it also includes explanatory texts surrounding the maps, no less than 653 endnotes with further literature references, and finally a map citation index, a scripture citation index, a general index, and a general bibliography.

The atlas includes a number of survey maps, portraying the Land of Israel from Dan to Beersheba from a number of different perspectives, such as, for example the patriarchs (p. 105, with useful Bible references) or the divided monarchy (p. 169). Moreover, it also includes a large number of more detailed maps; detailed both with regard to geography and particular events, such as for example the battles of Jericho and Ai/Bethel (p. 117) or the judgeship of Jephthah (p. 142). In a sum, author, cartographer (Nick Rowland), and publisher should be thanked for providing such an excellent tool for the intended users, defined as ‘pastors, small group leaders, and students’.

However, a couple of critical remarks should be voiced. First, the explanatory texts that surround the maps seem to take the historicity of the biblical narratives for granted. Critical scholarship’s questioning of the historicity of for example the patriarchs or the exodus, or the united kingdom of David/Solomon for that matter, is not reflected. The result is an atlas with a literary/textual (that is, the biblical text) rather than a historical (that is, the history of ancient Israel) emphasis, in spite of its frequently expressed focus on the latter. This is a reasonable choice with regard to the intended readership; still, one hopes that the users of the atlas are aware that the

explanatory texts are not representative of today's mainstream, historical-critical scholarship.

Second, from an African perspective one should ask whether the maps and explanatory texts in this atlas continue the traditional marginalization of Africa of this particular textbook genre. It has been argued by for example the Nigerian biblical scholar David T. Adamo (*Africa and Africans in the Old Testament* (1998), 1) that traditional western textbooks in biblical studies (introductions to the Bible, histories of Israel, Bible atlases, etc.) tend to 'de-africanize' the Bible, by locating Egypt in the Ancient Near East rather than in Africa, and by marginalizing the references to Cush. The present atlas does indeed relate the biblical land to Africa; geologically, such as when the Jordan Rift Valley is related to the Afro-Arabian Rift Valley (pp. 48-56), and historically, such as when Solomon's trade partner Ophir is located (without much evidence, it must be admitted) to the African side of the entrance to the Red Sea (pp. 159-162). At the same time, however, the literary/textual, rather than historical focus of the atlas prevents it from acknowledging some major historical lines, such as for example the occurrence of the Twenty-fifth/Cushite Dynasty of Egypt (760-656 BC), which deserves attention due to its influence on the Old Testament concepts of the Cushites.

In spite of these critical remarks, this revised version of Moody's Bible Atlas is a welcome and valuable contribution that will continue to illustrate and enlighten the texts of the Bible.

Tibebe Eshete

***The Evangelical Movement in  
Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience***

Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009. 525 pp. \$43.81 US

ISBN-10: 1602580022

ISBN-13: 978-1602580022

Reviewed by Steve Bryan, PhD

Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tibebe Eshete, Assistant Professor of History at Calvin College, provides the first full-length English-language history of the evangelical movement in Ethiopia. This work began as a doctoral dissertation at Michigan State University; supervised by the late Professor Harold Marcus. It traces the evangelical movement from its roots in various outside initiatives to bring renewal within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church dating back to the seventeenth century through the end of Ethiopia's tragic communist period in 1991. Drawing on dozens of oral interviews and archival sources, Tibebe weaves an engaging and thoroughly credible narrative of the emergence and growth of a church, which, in the face of severe opposition, has become an influential force in a troubled region.

Although Tibebe acknowledges the key role of Western missions in the establishment of Christian churches outside of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the major thesis of the book is that Ethiopian evangelicalism can by no means be construed as a "foreign" religion. This has been the major critique the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has leveled against the evangelical churches; a charge picked up with devastating effect by the Marxist Derg regime which rose to power in 1974. To make the case that Ethiopian evangelicalism is an indigenous movement and at the same time to remain true to the historical contribution of the Western missions, Tibebe has had to walk a fine line. He has done so primarily by crediting Western missions with impact rather than agency and depicting the evangelical movement as a

reformation movement that grew out of the Orthodox Church and brought to expression “a latent dimension of an already existing faith” (p. 314).

Tibebe’s case for the primacy of local agency in the growth of evangelicalism is argued in several ways, but three are key. First, Tibebe highlights the extent to which Ethiopian evangelicalism has its antecedents in Ethiopian Orthodoxy. Though the emergence of evangelical movements in contexts where there is a strong, established church is not unknown in Europe and elsewhere, this is far from the norm in Africa. In Ethiopia, the absence of colonial intrusion together with the presence of the Orthodox Church which had thoroughly shaped cultural norms and national identity for over 15 centuries, created a situation which “did not allow Western agents to engage in efforts of ‘civilizing missions’ and to impose Western culture in their pursuit of evangelization” (p. 314). Thus, Tibebe argues that Ethiopians embraced evangelical faith not so much as an act of desertion or denial, but as an act of reinforcement and reformation.

Second, Tibebe demonstrates that the two most astonishing periods of growth occurred when the Western missions were mostly absent (i.e. during the Italian occupation of 1936-1941 and the communist Revolution of 1974-1991). Not only did the churches grow numerically in the face of extraordinarily violent repression by means of courageous witness, but local leadership also proved remarkably adept at generating underground structures, and fostering cooperation across a spectrum of evangelical traditions. Even more importantly they created a vast corpus of gospel songs that gave expression to the evangelical commitment to remain faithful despite the predations of a brutal regime.

Third, Tibebe argues that much of this local leadership emerged out of an independent Pentecostal movement that erupted in the 1960s among students in urban areas and spread into most of the evangelical denominations during the time of the Revolution. Tibebe argues that the impact of the Pentecostal movement on urban educated youth provided the crucial link in the chain of events that led to the creation of an evangelical movement. Although some argue otherwise, Tibebe suggests that the contact between these young Pentecostals with Western missions was mostly incidental. Nevertheless, these urban, educated, and highly committed elite Christians, already tested by official pressure during the closing years of Haile Selassie’s regime, provided the leadership that enabled the evangelical churches not only to survive, but to thrive in the face of systematic attempts to violently eradicate them.

The importance of evangelical impact on Ethiopian youth, which Tibebe

rightly highlights, is further highlighted by Ethiopian census data released about the time Tibebe's book was published. This data shows that evangelical penetration of rural Ethiopia far outpaced its growth in urban areas. Tibebe may therefore be correct in asserting that the Revolution created the conditions which allowed evangelical Christianity to move out of its rural mission base into urban areas and thus to become a national Church. But this is true in only a limited sense. Today, 95% of all evangelicals live in just two of Ethiopia's eleven administrative regions and the movement remains overwhelmingly rural. Tibebe seeks to claim for evangelicals a portion of the space traditionally occupied by the Orthodox as the traditional purveyors and protectors of Ethiopia's national identity, but the claim will be vulnerable as long as evangelical presence in the country remains geographically limited.

In keeping with his narrative of evangelicalism as an authentic "national strain" of Ethiopian Christianity, Tibebe tells the story of foreign missions as one of impact rather than agency. In the earliest stages, the involvement of outside missions focused on the attempt to bring renewal within the established Orthodox Church by sparking a focus on the reading of Scripture and "a fresh revelation of the doctrine of salvation" (p. 311). In Tibebe's judgment, these efforts did not succeed, though the impact may be seen in several of the evangelical denominations. Other missions, beginning with SIM in the 1920's, sought to establish Christian communities outside the Orthodox church, but these mission-based churches experienced relatively slow growth, numbering only an estimated 250,000 by 1962 before jumping to nearly a million in the early 1970s with the advent of an indigenous Pentecostalism and then to 4 to 5 million by the end of the communist period in 1991. Tibebe's point seems to be that the impact of foreign missions was significant, especially in greatly increasing the availability of the Bible and initiating the establishment of communities outside the Orthodox Church. However, the agency by which evangelicalism became a movement was primarily Ethiopian. Although Tibebe briefly assesses the post-Communist period, it is not clear how he would assess the fact that between 1991, when various missions began to reestablish their presence in Ethiopia, and the national census of 2007, the number of evangelicals tripled to nearly 14 million (18.6% of the population). The most dramatic growth has occurred in Ethiopia's two largest denominations – the Kale Heywet Church and the Mekane Yesus Church – both of which are mission-based.

Tibebe's larger narrative may at times lead him to downplay the significance of the initial agency of Western missions as well as various forms

of secondary agency; most notably, their involvement in education and theological training. For example, Tibebe argues that the advent of modern education in 20<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia loosened the hold of traditional Orthodox society on Ethiopian youth and led them to seek alternative ways to affirm their faith, not least through the study of the Scriptures and the experience of personal faith. However, the admission of Western missions into Ethiopia was central to Emperor Haile Selassie's strategy to develop a modern educational system. Furthermore, the involvement of the missions in education became one of the primary means by which many youth were introduced to the personal study of Scripture and the notion of individual conversion. This by no means overturns Tibebe's case for the primacy of Ethiopian agency in the development of an evangelical movement in Ethiopia, but that emphasis may obscure somewhat the significance of the "missionary factor."

It is perhaps unfair to criticize this excellent piece of history for theological shortcomings, but one caution seems warranted. Against the charge that evangelical Christianity is foreign religion, Tibebe argues that evangelicalism in Ethiopia is authentically Ethiopian. He does so on the strength of his compelling case for the primacy of local agency. But surely Ethiopian agency alone is not what makes evangelicalism authentically Ethiopian, but rather also the nature of the encounter between evangelical faith and Ethiopian realities. These realities have meant that the evangelical focus on faithfulness to the gospel and its proclamation has led to extreme persecution. Tibebe's work, therefore, is a wonderful chronicle of one African community's profound commitment to biblical Christianity and to mission in the midst of recurring waves of violent opposition. I suspect that this, more than the claim he stakes to an evangelical share in Ethiopia's national identity, will be his greatest gift to Ethiopian Christianity and to the Church around the world.

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

Ruth Valerio. *“L” is for Lifestyle: Christian living that doesn’t cost the earth, Revised Edition.* Nottingham: IVP 2008

Nick Solly Megoran. *The War on Terror: how should Christians respond?* Nottingham: IVP, 2007

William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen, eds. *Global Dictionary of Theology.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Graham Beynon. *Mirror: discover your true identity in Christ.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Mike Cain. *Real Life Jesus: meaning, freedom, purpose.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

David Gibson and Daniel Strange, eds. *Engaging with Barth: contemporary evangelical critiques.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2008

John White. *The Fight: a practical handbook of Christian living, Revised.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

B.J. van der Walt. *The Eye is the Lamp of the Body: worldviews and their impact.* Potchefstroom: The Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa, 2008

Jason Gardner. *Mend the Gap: can the church reconnect the generations?* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Gerald L. Sittser. *Love One Another: becoming the church Jesus longs for.* Nottingham: IVP, 2008

Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds. *Faith Comes by Hearing: a response to inclusivism.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2008

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Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber, eds. *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, community, worship.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Julian Hardyman. *Maximum Life: all for the glory of God.* Nottingham: IVP, 2009

Peter G. Bolt, ed. *Christ’s Victory Over Evil: Biblical theology and pastoral ministry.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Thomas, R. Schreiner. *Run to Win the Prize: Perseverance in the New Testament.* Nottingham: Apollos, 2009

Keith Warrington. *Discovering Jesus in the New Testament.* Peabody: Hendrickson, 2009

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(Erwin van der Meer)

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*The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*

(Knut Holter)

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*The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience*

(Steve Bryan)

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