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In addition to his own spiritual preparation, the icon painter followed traditional rules of technique and representation, which were handed down by word of mouth from master to pupil over the centuries, and are now preserved in iconographic manuals. The best known of these manuals is probably that of Dionysius of Fourna, written about 1730. The most reliable and authoritative, however, is the *Explanation of Orthodox Iconography* (Athens, 1960), written by Fotis Kontoglous, the leading contemporary Greek icon painter, which is based on older sources than those used by Dionysius. Unfortunately, it has not yet been translated into English. The iconographic rules prescribed in detail how icons and frescoes are to be made and, in particular, how each person or theme is to be depicted. This has assured astonishing continuity of representation over the centuries, so that one acquainted with icons can tell at a glance what is the scene and who are the saints illustrated. I have a reproduction of a sixth century wall painting of the apostle Peter, from St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, which is recognizably the same person as that shown on Russian icons of Peter made ten centuries later—without (so far as I am aware) any possibility of direct copying.

The primary object of these iconographic rules, however, is to ensure that icons express God's truth, beauty and holiness, and thereby instruct, uplift and sanctify the worshipper. By following them, the icon painter sets himself to avoid everything that is arbitrary or novel, everything that is vague or superfluous, everything that is individualistic, subjective or sensual; in short, to avoid what belongs to the old order in which our perception of God's truth is blurred and the image of God in us is disfigured. The iconographic tradition is therefore diametrically opposed to those modern ideas with which we are all familiar, that art should faithfully copy nature, reveal the spirit of the times, or express the imagination and personality of the artist. Iconographic art seeks to transcend the limitations of our fallen, secular world: it is an art of the new creation, an art of redemption, of God, and humanity transfigured. As Western Christians who seek to respond to the challenge of secular attitudes in the arts, we would be foolish to overlook the lessons of the iconographic tradition of the Eastern Church, which is perhaps the most rigorous and sustained attempt yet made to create a specifically Christian art. Today, when visual images exercise an ever increasing influence over people [p. 214](#) through the new media of cinema and television, it can hardly be denied that the recovery of a Christian vocation in the visual arts is a matter of great urgency and importance.

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The Claims of Jesus in the African Context

David Gitari

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The *Letter to the Hebrews* opens with these words:

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by the son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.

These words are as relevant to the Christians in Africa today as they were to the Jews to whom the letter was addressed. In *many* and *various* ways God spoke to our forefathers in the continent of Africa. He did not speak to African tribes and cultures in one particular way; he spoke in *many* and *various* ways. Hence we do not speak of African religion, but we speak of African religions. We do not speak of one religious experience but of many varied encounters with God.

When the Gospel was first proclaimed to the African traditionalists, it was not preached to people who were in a spiritual vacuum. Rather it was preached to religious people who knew something about God but who were longing to know more. The claims of Jesus—to be the life of the world, the Son of God who comes on the stage of human history to reveal the Father—are usually received enthusiastically by the African people. The missionary effort of the last 150 years in Africa, south of Sahara, has been very successful. Today we are witnessing a tremendous growth of the church in some parts of Africa and the problem is how to cope with this unprecedented growth. In my own diocese, a new congregation begins at least once every month; we confirm an average of 500 candidates every Sunday. Statistics are, of course, not the best criteria for measuring church growth; growth in numbers can be deceptive. The church is faced with the problem of nurturing the Christians so that they grow in Christ and fully understand the implications of the Gospel.

THE GOSPEL AND CULTURE

If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to have a deep impact on the African people, so that “they may have life and have it abundantly”, then we must allow the Gospel to speak in the cultural situation of the Africans. **P. 216**

When God took the initiative to redeem mankind, he came as a man among men. He became human, a man in culture. He took a cultural name, Jesus. He spoke a cultural language. He received a cultural education, conformed to the cultural mores of his people. He did not become a Roman, an Egyptian or an Asian, but a Jew. He became a universal man, but he also became a member of a Jewish home, a part of a small town community. The Roman officials saw him as a radical insurrectionist. He spoke of God, his Father, from within his culture, and performed deeds of mercy among his people. A universal man must first become a particular man. The Son of Man revealed the Father in a particular cultural tradition. It is the will of the Father that this should be the pattern of Christian nurture and evangelism.¹

The incarnational principle therefore points the way to effective evangelism and strengthening of the church in Africa. If Jesus Christ had been born among the Ngombe people of Zaïre, he would have revolutionized their thinking about God. They live in a very deep forest and everything revolves around the forest; their understanding of God is based on the understanding of life in the forest. Jesus Christ would have revolutionized their forest-based religion without destroying it completely. He would also have revolutionized the religion of the Kikuyu people, which is based on mountain phenomena, without destroying it. The Kikuyu believes that God comes occasionally to visit his people

¹ Don Jacobs, *A New Look at Christianity in Africa*, p.5.

on the mountain top and that he has temporary homes on the tops of mountains like Mount Kenya and so on. Jesus said: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets, I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them." This same Jesus would have visited the African traditionalists without necessarily destroying their religion, but rather fulfilling their deep spiritual longings.

This, of course, does not mean he would have compromised with anything in the culture which is not true to the Gospel. He told the Jews:

You have heard that it was said, "you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy", but I say to you "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". ([Matt. 5:43-44](#)).

Jesus, speaking to the Masai, would tell them:

You have heard that it was said, "All the cows in the world belong to the Masai, hence taking cows from Wakamba or other places is not stealing, but rather bringing them back to their folds". But I say to you "if you love the Wakamba, you should not steal their cows".

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The Gabbra, a small nomadic tribe of about 20,000 people, live in a semi-desert area of northern Kenya. Their whole life is centred around camels, cows and goats. They move from place to place in search of water and grass. They know God as he who brings rain whenever and wherever he wishes. They travel over a wide area to find the place where God has brought the blessing of rain. In our evangelism we must go to the Gabbra people not as to pagans, but as to people who can hear the Good News from their own cultural context and express the Gospel in their own nomadic thought forms and philosophy.

Andrew Adano was born in this nomadic tribe. He was very reluctantly taken to school where he became a Christian. He felt called to the ministry and after theological training I ordained him a priest, about five years ago. His first wish was to return to his own people to bear witness to Jesus Christ. We asked, "What can we do to help you in your evangelism?" He replied, "Buy me a camel and a mule and 40 goats." So we bought him a camel and a mule and the goats. He went to live among his own people, followed them wherever they went, pitched a tent where they camped, grazed his goats with them and proclaimed the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Six months after starting his ministry the first person was ready for baptism. Andrew asked me: "Where shall I baptize him?" In the past he had only seen people being baptized in a church building. And I told him to baptize him any place considered holy by the people. The second question was: "How much water shall I use? We have so little water here." I said: "When you have plenty of water, baptize him by full immersion: when there is little water, baptize him by sprinkling."

At a clergy meeting Andrew was asked: "How many churches do you have?" And his answer was: "If a church means a building where people meet every Sunday, I have no church. But if it means a gathering of people regularly for worship then I have 25 churches, as I visit 25 magnattas, camping places, and there I organize worship. Not necessarily on a Sunday, but whenever I get an opportunity to go there." This is a Christian church literally on the move, moving from place to place, bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

The diocese is working together with Andrew Adano to alleviate the living conditions of these people. There is a great need for water and we are thinking of ways and means in which we can help them in the construction of dams ... There is also the current problem of famine and we are engaged in famine relief. To overcome these problems we need to go to the root causes of poverty. In addition to p. 218 the natural shortage of rain, there are also inter-tribal feuds, cattle rustling and poor planning by the authorities. Some of

these problems need to be tackled by working together with the government, influencing government policies among the nomadic people.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

I have no doubt that the Good News of the kingdom includes feeding the hungry. In some areas of Kenya we have recently been hit by famine. And I have personally been involved in famine relief activities. I have also challenged policies that have been responsible for famine such as bad planning, smuggling, etc. While acknowledging this as a part of our evangelism, I would like to make two observations from my own personal experience.

“FEED ME” MENTALITY

If our efforts to help the poor make them dependent on us, then we have not liberated them. Canaan Banana, the president of Zimbabwe, makes this point convincingly when he says:

The dynamics of being poor are such that the oppressed poor finally accept the inhumanity and humiliation of their situation. They accept the status quo as the normal course of life. Thus to be poor becomes both the state of things and an attitude to life, an outlook and even a world view. The vicious circle is completed when the oppressor in turn internalizes an attitude of permanent supremacy and paternalism towards the poor and undertakes to speak, think and act on behalf of the poor. The poor are thus made dependent and made to feel dependent on the rich.²

We do not liberate the poor by merely giving them their daily bread. This can also dehumanize them, when they have daily to queue so as to be served with porridge. We must work together with them in seeking ways and means of self-sufficiency. We must go to the very roots of the cause of hunger and poverty.

BREAD OF LIFE

After feeding the five thousand, Jesus told those who were looking for him:

Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labour for the food which perishes but for the food which endures to eternal life which the Son of man gives to you, for on him has God, the Father, set his seal ([John 6:26-27](#)). p. 219

Asked what this food was, Jesus said: “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall not thirst.” We know that the Jews murmured when he said this, but he confused them the more, when he told them:

Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who eats and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed and my blood is drink indeed ([John 6:53-55](#)).

The Good News to the hungry world must not stop at giving the bread which perishes. Evangelism is the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ so that people

² CWME, *Your Kingdom Come* (Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism), WCC, 1980, p.106.

understand the message, receive him as the bread of life, and are incorporated into the eucharistic life of the church.

In the culture from which I come, eating together is the highest expression of love for one another. People who drink tea from the same cup are said to love one another. Reconciliation includes not only settling a quarrel and seeking forgiveness, but also having a meal together. The worst punishment one can give to one's wife is to refuse to eat the food she has prepared; every meal one eats is an affirmation of one's love. When two families quarrel, the way of reconciliation is to slaughter a bull and eat it together; then the past is forgotten.

The eating of the bread and drinking of the blood of Christ at the eucharist table is an affirmation of our vertical love to God and horizontal love to one another, as we eat the bread from the same plate and drink the wine from the same eucharistic cup. Refusal to eat and to drink the flesh and the blood of Christ is an indication of our lack of love for Christ and for our neighbours. If we eat and drink in an unworthy manner, that is, without consideration for our brother, we are guilty of profaning the body and blood of Christ, of the Lord (I Cor. 11:27). So Paul says: "Let every man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." That self-examination which leads to repentance must be the basis of our relationships, our relationship with God and our relationship with our neighbour. If I have wronged my neighbour or if I intend to wrong him, then there is no love in me and I ought not to drink the same cup of love with him. This is why Judas, by accepting to eat and drink the first supper, committed an unforgivable crime. By eating and drinking from the same cup and the same plate he was affirming his love for Jesus Christ and his disciples when his mind was determined to betray him. Hence, the eating and drinking brought judgement upon him rather than a [p. 220](#) blessing. As Paul says: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgement upon himself" ([I Cor. 11:29](#)).

Any system that makes it difficult for a human being to express love to fellow human beings is contrary to the love that the Gospel proclaims. This is why the apartheid system in South Africa, which is supported by people who claim to be Christians, is totally contrary to the Christian Gospel. The system that provides separate eating places for whites and blacks does not permit the demonstration of love in the act of eating and drinking together. Even if the system allowed our eating together in the same dining hall, it is not yet adequate. It must be eating the same bread and drinking the same cup at the same dining table. Such eating must be an affirmation that I love Jesus and I love you who is sharing this eucharistic meal with me. But such love must not be only at the table of eating and drinking, after which we go and exploit one another, betray one another, and persecute one another. It must be genuine love. Apartheid is the greatest stumbling-block in demonstrating that Jesus is the life of the world in Africa. The black South African Christians want to express their love to their white brethren, but they find great walls blocking their way of love. Sending famine relief to the hungry black South Africans is not sufficient expression of that love. Love can be best expressed by breaking the barriers, and eating and drinking together is the highest expression of love.

MEANING OF "MAN"

In African culture, the way in which man can be man is within the family. The African culture knows no isolated individuals. Man is man because he belongs. He is a part of a larger family, a clan or a tribe. Hence John Mbiti says: "I am because we are." As a member of the family, man cannot be left on his own. His problem is a problem of everyone else in the family. The family includes both the living and the dead. The African man must be

careful to ensure that the dead ancestors are pleased by his behaviour and his decisions. If they are displeased, they must be placated. The Africans do not worship the spirits of ancestors; they honour and give reverence to them.

In some parts of Africa, the Christian Gospel has been preached as if it were relevant only to an isolated individual. A person has to make an individual decision to accept Christ. This is an importation of individualistic cultural thinking of the West. The Philippian jailor was baptized in the middle of the night with his household. Whenever an [p. 221](#) African person wants to make an important decision, he has to consult the whole family. Our evangelism in Africa must be aimed at families and groups of people.

A story is told of how some missionaries went to a village in West Africa and preached the Gospel to the chief of the tribe. The chief was impressed by the message and he wanted to accept Christ. He was told, however, he could only be baptized if he expelled his ten wives and remained with only one wife. He counted the cost of expelling his wives and his children and he concluded that the so-called Good News was bad news. He expelled the missionaries and told them never to appear again in his chieftdom. A few weeks later, Muslim missionaries arrived and preached Islam and told him to keep his wives. And he and his entire tribe embraced Islam.

REFUGEE SITUATION IN AFRICA

There are more refugees in Africa than in any other continent. Can those who live in refugee situations know Jesus as the life of the world? There are some people who think running away from one country to another is cowardly. They would like everybody to become a martyr. We should not only think in terms of dying for our countries, however, but also of living for our countries. Jesus became a refugee in Africa for two years and so he sanctified the refugee situation. He also said: "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart" ([Luke 21:20-21](#)). Many of the refugees tend to be too dependent, instead of making good use of their refugee situation. The message of Jeremiah of the exiles in Babylon is relevant to African refugees today:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear daughters and sons; multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" ([Jer. 29:4-7](#)).

It was the exiles who kept alive the hope of restoration and who became better equipped to bring a new Israel. It was among the exiles that the leadership was to be found—Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, etc. The exiles and refugees must not live in desperation. In them may be the hope of liberation of their countries. It may be that they will come up with a new hope, a new theological [p. 222](#) understanding of their situation and of the signs of the time. It was during the exile that the theology of hope was formulated by those who were in exile in Babylon. It was there that synagogues began. The persecuted and exiled should know that the persecutor can never persecute forever and ever. Ian Smith of former Rhodesia said there would be no majority rule in Rhodesia in his lifetime. Now Zimbabwe is liberated. St. Peter writing to the exiles of dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia tells them: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials ..." ([1 Peter 1:6](#)). The emphasis there is "a little while", not forever and ever.

POLITICAL SITUATION

In the fifties and sixties, the continent of Africa was preoccupied with political liberation, liberation from the shackles of colonialism. The coming of independence was hailed as the day of salvation. We still await anxiously the liberation of the last remnant of colonialism and the coming of majority rule, especially in Southern Africa. Our few years of independence, however, have taught us the hard lesson that political liberation cannot be an end in itself; it must be liberation from something to liberation for loving service. Self-determination and freedom to make political and economic decisions for oneself is good, but all has not been well for the continent of Africa. There have been military coups d'états, wars and rumours of wars, exploitation of the poor by the powerful, corruption and murder.

We cannot assume that Jesus as the life of the world comes when people are politically liberated. If the former colonial rulers were sinners, the new masters are also human beings, indeed fallen human beings, who are prone to the same temptations of exploitation, selfishness and so on. It is here that the church is called upon to exercise the prophetic ministry of reminding those who are in positions of authority that if God has allowed them to have authority over his people, then they should uphold justice which God requires.

The church cannot exercise this ministry unless it is both separate and, at the same time, involved. The Christian community that does not live a different life—that within itself has hatred, division, quarrels, corruption, injustices—has nothing to tell others. The message of the Gospel as proclaimed by the church can only be heard if the church lives up to its calling. The church in Africa must not be so closely associated with governing authorities that it will always be speaking in praise of them. The church should constantly praise [p. 223](#) those in authority whenever they uphold the justice and righteousness that God requires and then criticize them fearlessly whenever they depart from the justice that God requires.

If, however, Christian leaders are put in positions of authority, they should demonstrate what justice means. A Christian leader who continues with exploitation and oppression of people does great disservice to God and the church. Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was internationally known as a great Christian statesman. But within Ethiopia he maintained a feudal system, which promised no hope for the poor, until the advent of the present government. Had the official Ethiopian Church boldly exercised a prophetic ministry to the Emperor and others, it would have done a great service. The Emperor worshipped every Sunday in St. George's Cathedral where his throne was. The church and the state were the same. The feudal system continued. If the Ethiopian Church at that time had demonstrated what is meant by righteousness, Ethiopian history would have taken a different route. President Tolbert of Liberia was a pastor of his church as well as the president of Liberia. But he did little to correct the oppressive system, which was removed by the power of guns, rather than by the Gospel that he was privileged to proclaim every Sunday.

The Dutch Reformed Church has, since 1949, given the racist nationalist government the mandate and the blessing to continue oppressing the majority of South African blacks. They support an oppressive system primarily because of fear. Where there is fear there is no freedom and no life. If Jesus came to give life, liberation in South Africa will bring a new lease of life to those who are oppressed as well as those who are in the bondage of fear.

Political liberation, however, does not solve all the problems of the people. The liberator and the liberated must seek Jesus Christ. Not so that he can daily give them bread to fill their stomachs, but rather that they may believe in him, who is the bread of life.

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Patterns of Chinese Theology

Wing-hung Lam

The problems of indigenization discussed in this article are common to many cultures and must be faced as churches search for their cultural identity. Will these issues of pre-revolutionary China again be faced in post-Mao China?

(Editor)

The problem of indigenization is intrinsic to the task of evangelism. When the missionary attempts to communicate the Gospel to his audience, a process of indigenization begins which involves the psychology, the language, and the culture of both parties. The western missionary is brought up in a culture which has been for many years closely associated with Christianity, and whose content and expression are alien to the non-Christian country. His very presence in the mission field, his life-style and value are often identified, rightly or wrongly, with the religion he advocates. This inevitably imparts to the Christian message a foreignness that easily becomes a source of irritation to the local people. If dislike for foreignness is to be regarded as constitutive of human nature, such dislike is easily recognizable among the Chinese.

The necessity of indigenization was long ago felt by the Jesuit missionaries to China. In their effort of preaching Christianity, they were culturally conciliatory in their approach. They put on a Chinese appearance in their activities and mingled with the Confucian intelligentsia. Using western scientific knowledge to establish Chinese confidence in their message, they sought to accommodate their religion to the local civilization. Over the delicate issue which later provoked the Rites Controversy, the Jesuits took a moderate position, respecting the traditional practice of the Chinese. How successful was the Jesuit mission is a question outside our discussion, but it is undeniable that they had won the hearing and admiration of the Chinese literati.

The 1920s were a unique period in the history of Chinese Christianity when there was a host of experiments to indigenize the Christian faith. Before this time, there had been little, if any, theological reflection among Chinese Christians in confessing Christ in the context of traditional Chinese experience. Foreign missionaries were largely the spokesmen for the local Christian communities. And the Gospel consisted primarily in a western Christ presented to the humanistic and pragmatic Chinese mind. It is the purpose of this essay to analyze the various emerging patterns of theological construction by Chinese Christian intellectuals.

Theological contextualization in the twenties was the ideological side of the broader indigenous movement of the Chinese Church which was an effort to establish independence from western [p. 225](#) churches through self-support, self-government, and self-propagation. Impetus was given to this movement as a reaction to the nation-wide anti-Christian campaigns which ran through the decade. The outbreak of anti-Christian