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It is regretful that Barth omitted this important part but it is a natural result from his outlook on prayer. And Calvin indicates that the Lord has also impressed us with his example of his habitual withdrawal to a quiet spot that "we must not neglect these helps."

The fundamental question involved in Barth's theology of prayer is not really in this external form of prayer. The issue consists in the fact that in Barth's theology the most essential contents of the doctrine of prayer is seriously weak or almost missing: that is its 'ask-given' character. In Calvin this character of prayer is fully enlivened throughout his teaching on prayer. Prayer is nothing but an instinctive Christian practice of "fleeing to him in every need." As we bring our wishes before his eyes, we are prepared to receive his benefit with true gratitude of heart. Having obtained what we were seeking from his hand, we are led to meditate upon his kindness more ardently. At the same time, the things given from him become dearer to us than if we had obtained them from other sources. Thus, the fact of divine fatherly p. 358 providence is indeed more clearly confirmed through our use and experience of it.

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PRAYER AS NATURAL OR SUPERNATURAL

This is exactly the point which modern Western theology in general tries to avoid. If Bonhoeffer was thinking of "doing away with that age-old working hypothesis" and standing on his own feet as man come-of age, without God but before God, he was only honestly pursuing the same theological line which Barth had already set. Is it then superstitious that we ask something of God in prayer? Moreover, as a result, when we get something in a miraculous way, that is beyond the process which we have thought about, and even though secular people may commonly say with reference to such an effect that it occurs by chance—or that we are just ignorant of the natural causality hidden behind it and nothing else—is it a superstition that we believe it is caused by the supernatural spiritual Being? Of course, it is not always by supernatural methods that God grants us things according to His will. His will may be over-ruling the causal nexus of various levels; numerological, spacio-physical, psycho-physical and socio-ethical. We can hardly explain away how these overlapping multidimensional dynamics work out to a certain result. The only thing which we know is that God, the living One, who holds power over the world given us by His fatherly care, kindly provides us the things which we need by his divine power.

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The Church and Theological Ferment in Africa

Osadolor Imasogie

The Church of God in any given generation and historical milieu has one authentic and unchanging non-negotiable global mission. That mission is to bear witness to the Christ—the saving presence of God—in the midst of his creation. While this mission is timeless and valid for all times in its global scope, its actualization is "time conditioned and culture bound,"[1] because the historical ethos and the accompanying self-understanding of people are subject to periodic variations. The implication of this is that the Church must be alert to "discern the times and be sensitive to the context in which God has placed it"[2] if its witness to the saving presence of God is to be redemptive.

With that as a précis of an understanding of the task of the Church and the conditions under which it is carried out, this writer intends to develop the theme, "The Church and Theological Ferment in Africa," along three lines. Initially, an attempt will be made to present an overview of the present religious situation and its worldview in Africa and the Church's response heretofore. In the second place, attention will be called to some guidelines to be considered in developing a more effective mission strategy that will be responsive to the new appreciation of the realities of our situation. Finally, the role of theological institutions in the effective and comprehensive prosecution of the mission of the Church will be examined.

THE AFRICAN RELIGIOUS SITUATION

The continent of Africa is best described religiously as pluralistic, where religion is taken seriously by an overwhelming percentage of the population. This African religiosity has not been significantly affected adversely by growing materialism and sophistication. Each of the over 850 ethnic groups in Africa has a myriad of traditional divinities worshipped by a majority of its population. One such ethnic group is reputed to have between 400 and 1440 divinities available for worship.[3] Added to those are the Christian and Islamic religions that **P. 360** have been embraced by a sizeable number of Africans. From among the main historical Christian churches, particularly the Protestant groups, have sprung up over six thousand separate Christian church movements generally referred to as African Independent Churches.

In addition to these traditional divinities and various versions of Christianity and Islam, there are such Oriental religions as the Hare Krishna version of Hinduism and the Bahai faith, to mention only two, that have recently joined the struggle for African spiritual allegiance. Just as these Oriental religions and Islam are in the service of their respective founders, the Christian Church is in Africa, as has been pointed out, to bear witness to the saving presence of God in Christ. Since the African is the target of all these religions, our analysis of the theological situation will be limited to the African traditional religion and its worldview. The authenticity and depth of the Africans' existential response to the Christ will be determined by their perception of the Christ within their conceptual framework. In other words, if the Church is adequately to meet the spiritual needs of the Africans and successfully compete for their commitment, a workable knowledge of their traditional religion and the worldview and self-understanding

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[1] Arthur F. Glasser and Tracey R. Jones, Jr., "What is 'Mission' Today? Two Views," in *Mission Trends No. 1*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paolist Press, 1974), p.7.

[2] *Ibid.*, p.7.

[3] Bolaji Idowu, *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longman, Green and Co., Ltd., 1962). pp. 67–68.

fostered by it becomes a *sine qua non* for the agent of the Church. For this purpose, it is in order to give a brief description of African traditional religion and an African worldview. *Worldview* is to be understood here as that "complex of a people's beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, and structure of the universe and the interaction of its beings with particular reference to man."[4] Religion is usually a response-behavior to these beliefs. This overall framework of meaning is characterized by a unity of reality that has no room for dichotomy between the spiritual and the material, the sacred and the profane. This is so because the whole universe is the plane for the interaction between persons and spiritual forces, be they benevolent or malevolent. Thus, the typical African naturally perceives problems against the backdrop of a universe populated by multitudes of spiritual realities, many of whom are on the warpath against humanity either to satisfy their own propensity for evil or at the service of evil persons.[5]

Unlike the mechanistic model which presents the universe as a cosmic machine moving inexorably in response to a predetermined natural law, the African worldview perceives the universe as a dynamic equilibrium "that is constantly threatened and sometimes p. 361 actually disturbed by natural and social calamities."[6] That is why such disasters as flood, drought, famine, epidemic diseases, and even death are seen as resulting from disequilibrium occasioned either by malevolent spiritual forces interfering with the cosmic order or by humanity's infringement of some cosmic laws as prescribed by divinities. It is believed that these disturbers of cosmic equilibrium are controllable through the help of occult men and divinely appointed spiritual intermediaries. Consequently, the warding off of these evil forces in order to achieve tranquility becomes the major focus in the practices of African traditional religions. Such religious activities include divination, sacrifices, and rituals aimed at the restoration of cosmological balance without which persons cannot live in harmony with the natural, spiritual and human communities.

Hitherto the Christian Church in Africa has not taken the African traditional religions and their concommitant worldview into serious account in its mission. The result is that in times of serious existential crises the "average African Christian reverts to the traditional African religious practices"[7] for coping with such crises. The truth of this observation is substantiated by the phenomenal increase of what we have referred to as independent African Christian movements which arise from periodic waves of schism within the historical Christian churches. These protest Christian groups, which today boast of over six thousand such separate and Africanized Christian sects and a host of other more syncretistic churches,[8] are characterized by long worship sessions of visions, foretelling, spiritual healing, exorcism, and even ritual sacrifices. The sessions are conducted after the manner of the practices of African traditional religions for warding off evil forces and maintaining cosmic balance.

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[4] Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Towards an Evangelical African Theology," *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 7 (1983), 151.

[5] Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1983), p. 75.

[6] Adeyemo, "Towards an Evangelical African Theology," p. 151.

[7] Imasogie, *Guidelines*, p. 68.

[8] David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 6.

It is sad to note that the mainline Christian churches in Africa, with the possible exception of the Roman Catholic Church[9], have not shown sufficient awareness of the tremendous problem this neglect posed to the success of the mission of the Church. The problem has recently been heightened by the revival of culture in Africa and the popularity of departments of religious studies in African universities. While the churches have failed to take correct cognizance of the religious plurality and the accompanying theological hazards, it is p. 362 gratifying to note that a significant number of the so-called "African Christian academic theologians" and a few expatriates are beginning to make efforts to come to grips with the challenge. There are several articles and a few books dealing with the question of African Christian theology that take the African worldview and traditional religion into serious consideration. Some of these articles and books are listed in the notes.

In brief, all that legitimately may be said of these efforts to respond to the issue is that there is no consensus yet as to how the challenge to Christian theology posed by African traditional religions and an African worldview may be tackled. Such high sounding terms as *indigenization, africanization, incarnational theology, adaption*, and *contextualization* have been suggested as rubrics under which the task is to be prosecuted. The whole problem of consensus is further complicated by "the size of the Christian community in Africa, the variety of denominational experience, the immense variations between (sic) the human situation, the political and economic pressures."[10]

The result, according to Yusufu Obaje, is that some scholars criticize the lack of consensus by saying that while the "Black theology in South Africa is concerned only with the liberation of blacks in Southern Africa … African Christian theologies, coming mainly from the East and West African countries, attempt to recover the traditional African worldview."[11] This, he says, is unfair. Whichever position one may choose to take here, the truth is that the search for an authentic African Christian theology is still in a state of flux. This state of ferment notwithstanding, the search has begun. Henceforth no version of Christian theology in Africa will be considered to be spiritually satisfying if it is not informed by a clear knowledge of the cosmic spiritual struggle implied in the traditional religions and their worldview. The Christ must be presented first and foremost as the Victor and Liberator par excellence who forever lives to destroy the demonic forces wherever found. He does this to free those committed to him from the stranglehold of these evil forces. In addition, Christ must be proclaimed as the cosmic Lord who is more than able to supply all human needs within the context of each individual. Christ's saving concern must be seen as transcending narrow spiritual salvation to include liberation from human oppression and the reconciliation of man to God, to fellow humans and to nature. Given the traditional p. 363 religions and the African worldview delineated above, any apologetic endeavor that does not present Christ as being able to respond to all areas of human experience cannot command a total commitment of the African who has a holistic view of reality.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR A MORE RELEVANT MISSION STRATEGY

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[9] Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology—Adaptation or Incarnational?* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1975), pp. 145–160.

[10] Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976), p. 50.

[11] Yusufu A. Obaje, "The Church as a Theocentric Community with Special Reference to Certain Aspects of Traditional African Ideas of God and Man" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1982), p. 67.

In the massive *World Christian Encyclopedia*,[12] David Barrett predicts that by the year A.D. 2000, the present 203,490,710 adherents of Christianity on the continent of Africa will have increased to 393,326,210. This projected figure represents a little over 190,000,000 new Christians in 16 years. Whether or not this projection will be realized or exceeded will depend partially upon a more effective mission strategy in Africa. The more serious question, however, is what percentage of whatever number of African Christians exist at the turn of the century will be existentially committed to the Christ and his way of life? The answers as to the numerical strength and quality of African Christianity in the year A.D. 2000 stand or fall on the Church's awareness of the need for and success in its determination to evolve a new mission strategy that is responsive to the demands of the newly perceived situation. Crucial to the evolvement of whichever strategy may be devised is a new reappraisal of the important role which worldview plays in self-understanding. This is important because "communication from a person in one world view to someone in another will necessitate understanding of both world views."[13]

The point has been made that the present mission strategy in Africa—apart from limiting the number of possible converts—does not produce qualitative Christian spirituality that equips Christians to face the crises of life without wavering. When an inadequate Christianity ignores the place of a person's worldview in the understanding of self and perception of spiritual reality, it is unable to speak from the person's perspective. This inherent tendency not to empathize with the worldview of others has been the dilemma of every missionary in every age who takes the gospel to people of another culture. The same problem confronted the early apostles, especially those described as p. 364 Judaizers, as they carried the gospel to the gentile world. Unlike the apostle Paul, many of the earliest Christian missionaries insisted on interpreting the gospel only in terms of their own culture and worldview, which were not existentially meaningful to the Gentiles. Paul was well aware of this when he declared his strategy as follows:

> To win Gentiles who are outside the Law I made myself like one of them, although I am not in truth outside the Law, being under the Law of Christ. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. Indeed I have become everything in turn to men of every sort so that in one way or another I may save some. (1 Cor. 9:21–22)

It is unfortunate that two thousand years later Christ's disciples have yet not learned the lesson Paul taught.

In light of the above, it is in order here to re-examine the dilemma of foreign missionaries vis-à-vis their authentic proclamation of the gospel in a foreign culture. This will lay the basis for understanding the guidelines for an improved mission strategy which will be suggested. In the words of Father Segundo Galilea, a foreign missionary is "one who leaves his culture in order to proclaim the Gospel in a different culture."[14] Galilea goes on to add that the average missionary is always faced with unconscious temptation to "communicate his own ideals and his own cultural values as necessarily linked with

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[12] David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 4.

[13] Norman L. Geisler, "Some Philosophical Perspectives on Missionary Dialogue," in *Theology and Mission*, Papers and Responses Prepared for the Consultation on Theology and Mission, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, School of World Mission and Evangelism, March 22–25, 1976, ed. David Hesselgrave (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 243.

[14] Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas Stransky, eds., *Mission Trends No. 3* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 74.

Christianity."[15] This problem is often heightened for the missionary by the requirement to dance to the tune of the Foreign Mission Board, which monitors activities from a sort of ecclesiastical switchboard. The missionary requires more than goodwill to escape from this malaise; it demands what Galilea calls *Kenosis*. "The tragedy of the missionary," Galilea warns, "is that his action may well be a two-edged sword; he can do much good or much evil, depending on his attitude towards the local churches and cultures."[16] There is the other extreme reaction in which the foreign missionary uncritically swallows the foreign culture and worldview "hook, line and sinker" to the extent of inadvertently losing sight of the "ultimate reason for his missionary presence."[17]

An acceptable mission strategy is one that allows missionaries to be free to minister under a creative tension between the two extremes, realizing that neither their own culture nor the new one should be absolutized. What is being demanded is a conscious recognition that a p. 365 people's culture and worldview do condition their perception and that unless this is accepted the missionary is not in a position to proclaim the gospel in an atmosphere that is conducive for the "Word to become flesh" in that culture. This point has been succintly expressed as follows:

> Within an evangelical framework, cultural contextualization of Christian truth involves a dynamic process of sympathetic understanding leading to empathetic identification with the culture so that Christianity may be "inculturated" within the indigenous forms of the recipient peoples. Nothing of the supercultural is to be lost or distorted.[18]

If this desired goal is to be achieved, the missionary must be able to introspect so as to discover the influence of the home culture in the apprehension of the gospel. This is easier said than done, but it is a task that must be pursued seriously in as much as the preaching of Christ is a matter of life and death which must not be taken lightly.

Against this background it is imperative for every Foreign Mission Board to build into its mission program an opportunity for its prospective missionaries to have an in-depth study of the religion and worldview of the particular people among whom they are to serve. It is not likely that this all-important exposure can be adequately handled in the missionary's own country, for lack of required expertise and necessary practical exposure. It is advisable, therefore, that arrangements be made for a comprehensive orientation course on the mission field. The course should be long and intensive enough to be meaningful. It should include the study of the traditional religion, African worldview, the cultural practices of the people, and the language. Included also in this orientation should be a history of the country, with particular emphasis on Christian missionary activities—failures and successes—compared with other religious groups.

Having now dealt with the question of worldview and the proclamation of the gospel, attention will be turned to the question of strategy in the light of the African situation. Foreign mission strategy in Africa has hitherto consisted mainly in evangelism through schools and hospitals. As a strategy this has been very successful. It has produced national Christian leaders as well as political leaders throughout Africa. Any objective African historian will come to the inevitable conclusion that the present developments in education and health services owe their impetus to foreign missionaries who built and

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[15] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

[18] "The Contextualization of Theology," in *Theology and Mission*, p. 329.

used these institutions for evangelistic purposes. By their very natures p. 366 both schools and health centers presented the Church with captive audiences. In that case it did not matter much whether or not their worldview and religions were ignored; converts were made. The result of the inadequacy of this policy was, however, reflected in the often superficial commitment of most of the so-called converts who equated attendance at mission schools and treatment at mission hospitals with being Christians. With the rise of nationalism and subsequent political independence, most of the African states have now assumed responsibility for education and health care. As a result, Christian missions have lost their erstwhile effective mission strategy and captive audiences. In a few instances, the Church has not only lost this twofold useful mission strategy but they have also incurred the usually unjustified hostility of radical nationalists who, often under the subtle influence of Islam and communism, identify Christian missionaries with the exploitive colonialists from whom they wrested political power. They insist that, like the colonialists, the missionaries must be sent packing out of Africa.

This state of affairs, to say the least, must be painful and frustrating to the various foreign mission boards because it engenders a sense of insecurity and spells a bleak future for missionary activities in Africa. This may be said to be a crisis for the mission of the Church in Africa. Responding to a similar situation in Latin America, William B. Frazier concludes that:

> Despite the insecurity and discomfort which accompany them, crises are usually occasions of progress. The reason, of course, is that progress does not happen until we have lost confidence to some degree in the status quo. There is every indication that missionaries are presently struggling with a crisis of this kind, a crisis of creativity, out of which, hopefully, a corrected sense of missionary identity may emerge.[19]

Indeed, a crisis of this nature calls for creativity which will result in a new strategy that is best suited for the new situation in which God has placed the Church in Africa to bear witness. If the Church is to develop a new strategy, it must first re-examine its original model for the self-understanding of its mission which, perhaps unconsciously, influenced the continuing strategy for which a substitute is now being sought.

The two time-honored and hitherto effective components of mission strategy, schools and hospitals, derive from what Frazier calls the "Sanctuary Model" for the understanding of the mission of the Church. According to Frazier, this model sees the Church as the p. 367 "Sanctuary of Salvation … a place of refuge situated in a hostile environment"[20] to which all persons may come for protection and spiritual nourishment. As long as the Church sees itself this way, its mission is conceived as extending its spiritual blessings to all that come within the "Sanctuary" while those outside have themselves to blame. One negative implication of this image of the Church is that many of those who came in the past unwittingly identified themselves as Christians because they equated education and health with the Christian faith without existential committment to Christ. Thus an educated person with a foreign "Christian name" was regarded as a Christian irrespective of faith-commitment, while the illiterate with a "native name" was considered a pagan.

In exchange for "sanctuary" as a model of its self-image, Frazier suggests that the Church now consider the model of a "sign":

> Unlike a sanctuary, a sign is meant to point beyond itself and to have impact outside itself. Unlike a sanctuary, a sign is not an enclosure, but a disclosure. A sign performs its function

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[19] William B. Frazier, "Guidelines for a New Theology of Mission," in *Mission Trends No. 1.*, p. 25.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

not by containing, but by communicating; not by annexation, but by representation. In relation to their respective environments, a sign is a humble image, sanctuary a haughty one; sign is an image of service, sanctuary an image of separation; a sign is co-operative, a sanctuary is competitive; a sanctuary finds within itself any action which is really important, a sign points beyond itself to where the action is. In a word, the main improvement of a sign over sanctuary as an image of the Church is the quality of openness to its environment which, in application to the Church, means openness to the world.[21]

It is imperative that the Church divest itself of the sanctuary image and put on the sign image for self-understanding.

A change in the model for self-understanding as suggested above will enable the Church to develop a strategy of mission that is capable of ministering in all human situations, even where the saving presence of God is not easily discerned because the Church sees herself as "a sanctuary of salvation." The new strategy must include a veritable secularization of the theology of missions, which makes no distinction between the sacred and the profane, the clergy and the laity. This has been an unfortunate distinction—a distinction not recognized by traditional African religions nor by the God of the Hebrews. This new dynamic theology of missions interprets God's creation as a unified whole where Christians are called upon, whatever their vocation, to p. 368 become partners with God in the process of spiritual transformation and humanization of men and women. The new model of "sign" for the Church's self-understanding no longer allows the church to wait for people to come from the world for refuge, but will go out into the world as the sign of God's saving presence. It will be there, bearing witness to the involvement of God wherever people struggle for development, freedom, peace, improved health and working conditions, political self-determination, and everything that makes for humanization as a testimony to God's saving concern for the actualization of the purpose of creation.

Laypersons will be actively enlisted and trained as missionaries to permeate every walk of life, every profession and movement, as spiritual yeast that leavens every pocket of human lump for the glory of God. This will not in any way detract from the importance of ordained ministers who will still be the spiritual leaders of the Church. It will, rather, hallow every acceptable vocation as God's potential instrument through which the richness of the Christian life of holiness can be manifested in the midst of the world where the issues of life are decided.

This type of mission strategy makes provision for a more active and participatory involvement of the nationals in the planning and execution of mission programs. The lack of such mutual involvement is responsible for the occasional call for "moratorium," which is an ill wind that does no one any good. Participation of nationals at this level is important because, by virtue of their citizenship and culture, they are always in a better position to mediate the saving presence of God to their fellow citizens without the suspicion that may sometimes hinder the effectiveness of a foreign missionary. If the implied model of partnership in mission is to become a reality, the existing model for understanding the relationship between the "sending church" and the "receiving church" must be reviewed in terms of mission policies. No longer should the model of "he who pays the piper dictates the tune" prevail. If the funds for missions are truly given for that purpose, then the partners in mission together should plan, under God, for their use and for the most judicious deployment of missionary personnel.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

Thus far attention has been drawn to the mission of the Church in Africa in the light of a new appraisal of the African religions and social context. It has been argued that if the church is to fulfill its mission it   **P. 369**   must not only have a working knowledge of the religion, the resulting worldview, and the self-understanding of the African, it must also design a mission strategy that is best suited for the situation. But mission is much more comprehensive than bringing people to initial commitment of their lives to the Christ. The command of the Risen Lord is that such people must be taught "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded…." The implication of this is that the Church must become the center of theological instruction and discussion. The tragedy of our time is that the overwhelming majority of the so-called converts drop out of the Church for lack of effective programs for spiritual nurture. On the other hand, for the same reason, a majority of those who still identify themselves with the Church are neither hot nor cold. The Church does not have effective programs for nurturing its members a spiritual vitality because most of its present leaders are ill-equipped to develop such programs.

Theological institutions in Africa have a vital role to play in developing trained spiritual leaders who will ensure that Christians are trained and stimulated to remain vitally committed to Christ and to be responsible to the conscious leadership of the Holy Spirit. Achievement of this goal presupposes the existence of curriculum designed to provide the theological students with theological ground and contextualized professional know-how that will equip them to bring biblical insights to bear on the spiritual, emotional, and social needs of their parishioners within the cultural milieu.

Judging from what has been said concerning the Church's neglect to take the African situation seriously in its proclamation of the gospel, one may conclude that this same neglect has also affected the curricula of the various denominational and nondenominational theological institutions. A glance at any such theological curriculum will reveal a carbon copy of the theological curriculum of the home country of the specific church or seminary model. The obvious result is that pastors trained in such schools do not have the tools to render effective ministry to the people under their care. Relevant curricula are not developed in a vacuum. Curricula are aimed at equipping students to meet specified needs in a particular cultural environment. To achieve the desired aim it is essential that the curriculum be a product of an adequate knowledge of the self-understanding of a given community within its worldview. This is crucial inasmuch as one's worldview, as has been argued, affects one's perception of reality and one's relation to that reality. In other words, a theological curriculum developed to meet needs in a specific cultural environment may not be a successful instrument in another cultural setting. This will be the case   p. 370   because the worldview and the thought pattern and the consequent perceived needs of the people in the latter culture were not taken into consideration in its original formulation.

While there are some basic core courses such as biblical studies, biblical languages, church history, etc., without which one cannot talk of a theological curriculum, they may not "become flesh" in the life of the people unless they are passed through the prism of their thought pattern. This is why theological institutions in Africa need to re-evaluate their curricula in the light of the African situation. An objective review of existing theological education curricula will indicate the necessity of including courses on such areas as African traditional religion, Islam, theological methodology, apologetics, spiritual formation of the theological student, African Christian theologies, Christianity and contemporary issues, African Church history, pastoral psychology, the independent

African Church movement, etc. The overriding aim in all of these is to train the pastor to be able to bring the claims of Christ to bear on every issue of life as perceived by the parishioner. For instance, the current curriculum, which is a replica of a theological curriculum from the West does not provide for dealing with the fear of the nefarious spiritual forces in whose grips the average African lives. The absence of this opportunity is understandable because in the western worldview such fears are considered irrational—fit only to be treated by professional psychiatrists. In the African context it is a commonly recognized spiritual problem which needs a spiritual solution. Consequently, when the trained African pastor is confronted with such a problem by a church member, the pastor is unprepared to minister effectively because current theological training does not expose students to that area of human experience.

Incidents like this, arising from inadequate theological preparation for contextualized proclamation of the gospel, must have led the recently deceased veteran foreign missionary Bishop Stephen Neill to the following conclusion:

> Unless the first deliverance from fear has been fully accomplished, unless Jesus has really been enthroned as Conqueror of the demons, the believer is still half-living in the old naturalistic world in which the spirits have power and the time has not yet come in which his ears will really be opened to hear the teaching concerning sin, righteousness, repentance and forgiveness.[22] p. 371

This observation re-emphasizes the truth that one's view of life is shaped by culture and no matter what effort is made to suppress it, it continues to surface at critical moments in life. The only effective way of dealing with such fears is to bring them to the conscious level where they can be dealt with. This is the point Neill is making here. A theological institution is under obligation to devise a curriculum that makes provisions for a comprehensive examination of the African situation and the sufficiency of Christ in meeting any and every eventuality. It needs to be pointed out that the use of the phrase "theological education" throughout this paper is not restricted to institutional seminaries and colleges. It includes noninstitutional theological educational programs such as theological education by extension and correspondence courses designed to train Christian ministers.

Of course, it is to be assumed that those responsible for designing this curriculum and educating pastors are people who, in their training and field research would have sat where the parishioners sit and have learned from them "where the shoes pinch." It is only teachers with such an experimental background that can relate theories to practice. Whatever the limitation of their exposure to this area in their training, this is an experience which all intelligent and imaginative, dedicated theologians can acquire through field research.

Thus, at the heart of the role of theological education is the obligation to ensure that those who have responded to the call of God into the spiritual leadership of the Church are adequately trained to lead. There is no other institution that is designed and equipped to meet this need.

The mission of the Church in Africa will not be complete until everyone is incorporated into the the life of God through Christ. The validity of such an incorporation can only be measured by the degree to which the *Word has once again taken flesh in the culture and thought-pattern of the African*. It is only then that the African Christian can live life as a virtual proclamation of the gospel in all of its ramifications here and now as a foretaste of

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[22] Stephen Neill, *Christian Faith and Other Faiths: The Christian Dialogue with Other Religions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 174f.

unmediated eternity with God. If this expectation is not to remain a mere dream, the theological institution must play its role as the spiritual watchdog of the Church to see to it that the Church ministers to the total needs of persons, without which no one can be existentially committed to God—a commitment which is the goal of the church's mission.

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Book Reviews

ETHICS AND SOCIETY

Ronald J. Sider and Richard K. Taylor, *Nuclear Holocaust and Christian Hope*
Reviewed by Kenneth G. Greet

Christopher J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God*

J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit*
Reviewed by Peter Jensen

Hermann Sasse, *This is My Body*
Reviewed by James Atkinson

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Anna C. Hogg, *Values in Focus*
Reviewed by Kathleen D. Nicholls

Ethics and Society

NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST AND CHRISTIAN HOPE
by Ronald J. Sider and Richard K. Taylor
(Hodder and Stoughton 1983)
Pp. 368, pb. $1.95

A review by Kenneth G. Greet in *Faith and Thought* January 1984

One of the most moving passages in this useful and impressive book comes near the end: 'We confess that heavy foreboding has slowly settled upon us in the months that we have worked on this book. We have not abandoned hope, but it comes harder now'.