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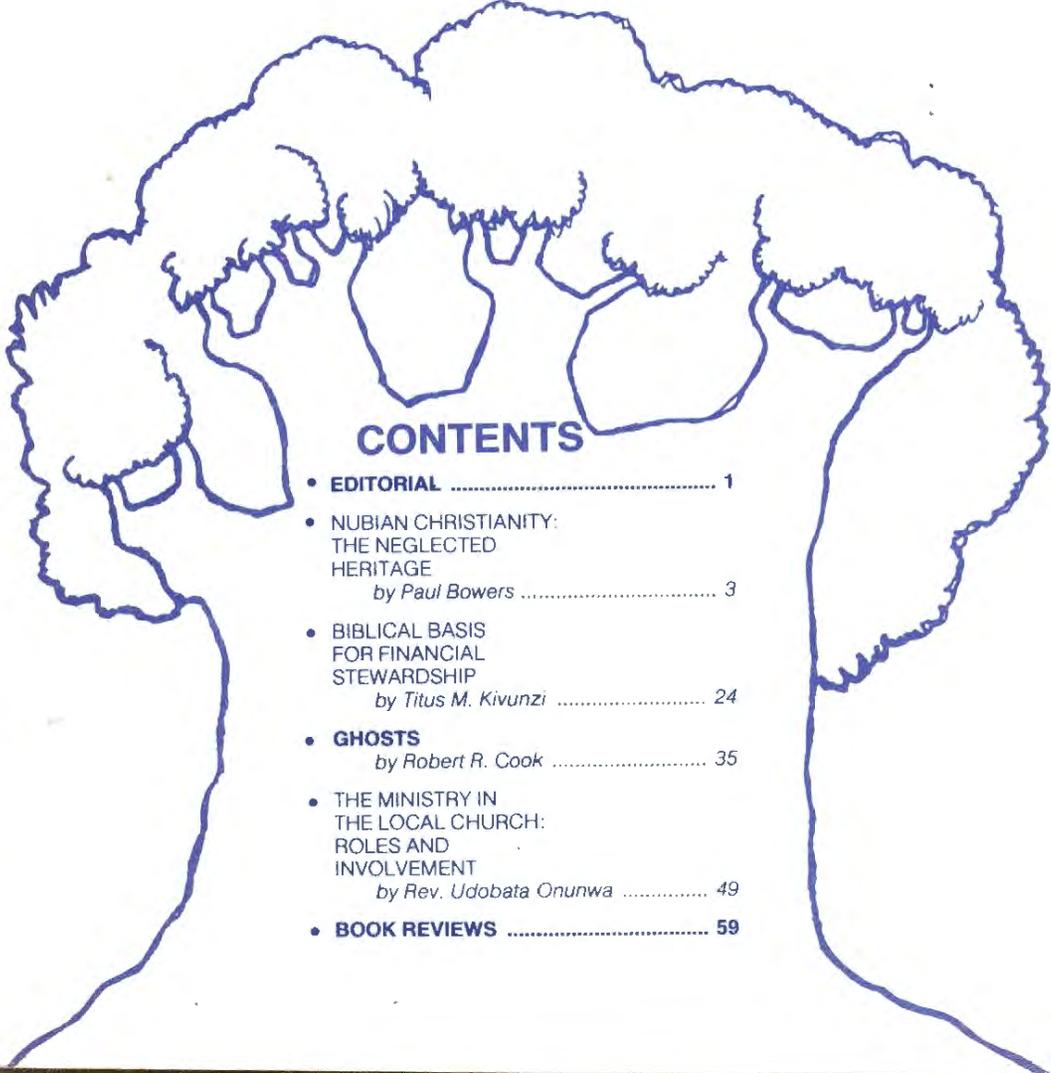
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# *east africa journal of evangelical theology*

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## THE EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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EAJET is published twice a year by the staff of Scott Theological College in order to provide African evangelical theological students with editorial, articles and book reviews on subjects related to theology and ministry.

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We welcome articles and book reviews from an evangelical perspective. Reviews and articles should be typed on one side only, double-spaced with end - notes, Send to:

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

# EDITORIAL



In the last decade or so, there has been an increasing interest in theological education in the third world which includes the continent of Africa. Much has been said and written concerning the issue in question. Unfortunately, much of the contribution towards the issue has been done by those who have been outside the African context.

For about four years, EAJET has been attempting to deal with this very issue. The goal has been to help build the church in Africa by providing materials from sound biblical and evangelical perspectives.

In this issue, there are four articles all geared towards building the church of Jesus Christ here in Africa. Paul Bowers writes on the antiquity of Nubian Christianity, a distinctive of the church in Africa. Titus Kivunzi underscores the important question of Biblical basis for financial stewardship. Rob Cook investigates the fascinating subject of Ghosts. Udobata Onunwa deals with the ministry of the local church.

There are a number of important book reviews covering subjects such as theology church growth, Theological Education by Extension, etc. It is our sincere hope that you will be blessed by reading this issue.

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# **NUBIAN CHRISTIANITY: THE NEGLECTED HERITAGE**

Paul Bowers

The popular notion that Christianity is only a recent import to Africa is a misperception more widespread and influential on the continent than one might expect. Echoes are not lacking in scholarly literature, even in scholarly Christian literature.<sup>1</sup> The subtle impact of such an assumption within African Christianity must not be underestimated.

Indeed, it is vital to African Christian self-understanding to recognize that the Christian presence in Africa is almost as old as Christianity itself, that Christianity has been an integral feature of the continent's life for nearly two thousand years. John Mbiti was emphasizing just this in his bold statement: "Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion."<sup>2</sup> And Byang Kato was making the same point when he gave to one of his major addresses the provocative title: "Christianity as an African Traditional Religion."<sup>3</sup> In the search for self-identity, which lies so near the heart of the modern African Christian intellectual quest, the long history of Christianity in Africa is a fact needing urgently to be recognized, embraced, and appropriated.

The careful student of African Christian history is well aware that Christianity in North Africa, once so

vibrant and productive, was in due course wiped out by the Arab Islamic conquests beginning in the seventh century. That Christianity began in Ethiopia in the fourth century, and survived continuously into the present, is also familiar. That Christianity in Egypt, planted as early as Pentecost, has also survived into the present, in the Coptic Christian community, is not perhaps as common an awareness as it should be. But that there was another important branch to early African Christianity, a fourth member, is not part of general Christian awareness on the continent. That there was a powerful branch of Christendom in what is now northern Sudan, a Christianity that lasted for more than a thousand years, is till now a fact familiar only to those in Africa who study their church history sources with special care.

We live today amidst the third planting of the Christian faith in this continent. As we seek to grapple with the challenges and dangers presented by the phenomenal growth of Christianity in this third period, we do well to reflect on the fate of the earlier plantings. We are right to inquire why the Portuguese mission along the southwestern coast of Africa, beginning in the fifteenth century, at times took lively root, yet failed to survive, and is today represented only by centuries-old church ruins in the bush south of the Zaire estuary. We do well to ask why the vibrant Christianity of North Africa disappeared, whereas the Egyptian variety survived, albeit as an oppressed minority. And why in contrast did the Ethiopian version manage to sustain an embattled dominance in its remote centres? Curiously enough, the fourth member of early African Christianity followed none of these patterns. Nubian Christianity, as it is called, neither suffered an early eclipse, nor did it become a suppressed minority; it lasted intact from the sixth century well into the fifteenth century, only at last, unlike Ethiopia, to suffer complete extinction. Why this difference?

Until recent times historical scholarship knew very little about this branch of the early church. Oddly enough, we owe today's considerably increased knowledge of Nubian Christianity to a remarkable technological achievement of our own generation, the building of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt not twenty-five years ago. Because the dam would produce an immense lake eventually covering up almost all archaeological remains in the Nile Valley for three hundred miles south of Aswan, an international consortium of archaeological investigations evolved, under UNESCO auspices, to dig out as many hitherto unattended sites as possible before the waters rose. The results of this extraordinary international cooperation included an awesome wealth of fresh information about Nubian Christianity. Fully fifty percent of all sites investigated were from this particular period of Nubian history, and resulted in both spectacular discoveries and a vast accumulation of details.

That African Christianity has been generally unfamiliar in the past with this part of its heritage is not altogether surprising, since what was earlier known about Nubian Christianity was relatively limited. What **is** altogether surprising is that today so little of the remarkable recent increase of knowledge about Nubian Christianity has yet been assimilated into the standard modern treatments of African Christian history in common use.<sup>4</sup> Incredibly, virtually no standard presentation on African church history currently available includes any data visibly derived from the extraordinary discoveries of the past twenty-five years on Nubian Christianity.

When one begins to explore the matter, this lacuna in current treatments of African church history unexpectedly turns out to be even broader. Until the 1930s Nubian archaeology had largely neglected the Christian period, and the information available on Nubian Christianity tended to be scanty and dispersed. In 1935 the scholar Monneret de Villard, following his

intensive and comprehensive investigations from 1929 to 1934 into both the material and the literary remains of Christian Nubia, published the first two volumes in his monumental **La Nubia Medievale**.<sup>5</sup> He followed this in 1938 with his **Storia della Nubia Cristiana**.<sup>6</sup> With these publications Monneret de Villard at a stroke and single-handedly introduced fifty years ago a whole new era in Nubian Christian research. It is a matter for astonishment to discover that not only do no current standard treatments of African Christian history yet utilize the discoveries flowing from the UNESCO project of the past twenty-five years, but that in addition it is difficult to find any which directly utilize even Monneret de Villard's foundational contribution of fifty years ago. All are apparently dependent almost exclusively on secondary studies representing the state of research preceding Monneret de Villard.

The statement requires the support of some specific data. A brief, slightly technical sleuthing through the main literature will serve this purpose. (Admittedly this will not appeal to all tastes, and some may wish to go on to the next paragraph). To begin with, neither of the two established reference tools in the field, the **Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church** nor the **New International Dictionary of the Christian Church**, treats Nubian Christianity, though they allocate separate articles to Coptic, Ethiopian, and North African Christianity.<sup>7</sup> S Neill, in his standard **A History of Christian Missions** (Harmondsworth, 1964), does not discuss Nubia. J Hildebrandt's very useful **History of the Church in Africa** (Achimota 1981), depends for its account of Nubian Christianity primarily on Groves (1948). P Falk, in **The Growth of the Church in Africa** (Grand Rapids, 1979), principally relies on Groves (1948) and Cornevin (1964). By using Cornevin, Falk inadvertently manages a fleeting third-hand contact with a single reference to Monneret de Villard: the historian Cornevin (R Cornevin, **Histoire de l'Afrique** [Paris, 1964]) made use of the Sudan specialist A J Arkell (**A History of the Sudan** [London,

1955]), and Arkell contains one passing reference to Monneret de Villard's *Storia della Nubia Cristiana*. C P Groves's basic study, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa* (London, 1948), relies on Latourette (1938), E A Wallis Budge (*History of Ethiopia, Nubia, and Abyssinia* [London, 1928]), and H A MacMichael (*A History of the Arabs in the Sudan* [Cambridge, 1922]). K S Latourette, in his monumental *A History of the Expansion of Christianity (Volume II: The Thousand Years of certainty* [New York, 1938]), employs a wider range of secondary sources, the latest of which included J Kraus (*Die Anfänge des Christentums in Nubien* [Vienna, 1931]), Wallis Budge (1928), and the preliminary reports of discoveries by Monneret de Villard which appeared in the *New York Times* 9 March 1931 and 14, 17 March 1933, prior to full publication of his work.<sup>8</sup>

In short, the standard presentations on Nubian Christianity in current use for African church history are, in the sources used, essentially a half century behind the present state of inquiry, a half century marked by both fundamental and dramatic advances in Nubian Christian studies. This is indeed a neglected heritage.

Ancient Nubia (roughly from Aswan southward to modern-day Khartoum) was a well-known and prosperous land already in Old Testament times. Inhabited by people of dark complexion, it was intimately involved in the history of ancient Egypt. In the Old Testament it is frequently mentioned under the title of "Cush" or "Ethiopia".<sup>9</sup> The "Ethiopian eunuch" of Acts was in fact not from the land today bearing that name, but from Nubia. (The queenly title given in Acts 5:27, Candace, is peculiar to the ancient Nubian kingdom of Meroe.) In the New Testament period Nubia was in constant intercourse with the Mediterranean world, and maintained diplomatic relations with Rome. While the Apostle Paul was travelling round the Aegean, the emperor Nero dispatched a small expedition to explore the farthest reaches of the Nile, which apparently

penetrated past Meroe all the way to the Sudd region, some six hundred miles south of modern Khartoum, well into the heart of Africa. Seneca, a contemporary of Paul, recounts the report which the two centurions leading the expedition made on their return to Rome.<sup>10</sup> One cannot but wonder what course the spread of the gospel might have taken had Paul heard this report, had his pioneering instincts been aroused by it, and had his life been spared for further missionary effort.<sup>11</sup>

The Nubian kingdoms officially converted to Christianity about AD 540. The Arab conquest in the next century uncharacteristically floundered when it attempted to extend its sway southward from Egypt along the Nile into Nubia. In the centuries following, the Christian kings of Nubia held their own against the Islamic rulers of Egypt, and at times exerted considerable diplomatic and even military pressure for relief of the oppressed Christian communities of Egypt.

The Nubian church was predominantly Monophysite in theology, in alignment with Coptic Christianity of Egypt, though there is also evidence of strong Byzantine influence as well. The bishops were consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and apparently many were trained there, and some originated there. At least parts of the Bible were translated into Nubian, as any student of NT Greek can verify (by reference to the apparatus of his **UBS Greek New Testament**, with its indications of ancient manuscripts in a Nubian version).<sup>12</sup> Nubians were familiar pilgrims in the Holy Land in early medieval times, and maintained contacts with the Ethiopian church. Until recently the conventional wisdom was that Nubian Christianity finally succumbed to Islamic encroachment early in the fourteenth century. The latest discoveries and research have established that in fact Christianity was still officially functioning in Nubia late in the fifteenth century (in the very year of Martin Luther's birth) and suggest that tiny remnants of the Christian community may have existed even as

late as the middle of the eighteenth century. Eventually the population was entirely absorbed into the Islamic ethos. Catholic missionaries passing up the Nile in the last century could still find a memory among the tribes that their forebearers had been Christian.<sup>13</sup>

Did Nubian Christianity exert any influence beyond its borders southward and westward in Africa? It is a tantalizing question, with only tantalizing scraps of data, but data begging for further scholarly inquiry. Passage southward along the Nile was always severely limited by the impenetrable swamps of the Sudd, but westward the trade caravans were a normal fact of life. Archaeologists have identified remains of a Nubian monastery in western Sudan near the Chadian border. Nubian artifacts have also been uncovered north of Lake Chad.<sup>14</sup> Franciscan missionaries based in Tripoli early in the 1700s reported rumours, brought across the Sahara by the caravans, of a Christian kingdom south of the Hausa and Bornu states. A Franciscan team was eventually sent on the hazardous errand to try to find out the truth of this. They got all the way to Katsina, but succumbed to disease there before they could complete their mission. Christian symbols were reported in the last century among the royal regalia of a tribal kingdom on the Benue, south of Hausaland, though the religious meaning of the symbols had been forgotten.<sup>15</sup> A missionary trekking from Lake Chad to the Nile at the beginning of this century was told of a tribe nearby which yearly congregated at an ancestral site, held up an ancient sword on which was engraved the sign of the cross, and prayed that God would restore to them the knowledge of the true way to Him of their forefathers, long since lost through conquest by followers of the Prophet.<sup>16</sup>

If Monneret de Villard introduced the second era of modern Nubian Christian research, the UNESCO project clearly inaugurated the third era, in a vast outpouring of discoveries and research, begun in the 1960s and

only now starting to ebb. While the results have yet to be exploited by historians of African Christianity, they are altogether familiar to the specialized worlds of archaeology, classical studies, and Egyptology (indeed Egyptologists have long treated Nubian studies as an annex of their own discipline). The UNESCO appeal for international cooperation, issued in 1959-60, received immediate enthusiastic response, with some forty separate expeditions organized from university and research circles, mainly from the developed world, east and west, but including one from India and one from the University of Ghana.<sup>17</sup> Termed the greatest archaeological salvage operation of all time, it captured the imagination of the world especially with the successful removal to higher ground of the temples of Rameses II at Abu Simbel. The cooperative project had largely run its course by 1970, as the new lake reached its full height, though important diggings continued well into the 1970s at Qasr Ibrim, a fortress remaining above water. (At the same time, it should be noted that this vast archaeological endeavour covered only the area to be inundated, and has left numerous important sites south as far as Khartoum still uninvestigated. For that section of Nubia little more is known today than was known before the UNESCO project. There is considerable room for more archaeological work, with the prospect of significant finds.)

A brief sampling of some of the more important results of the UNESCO effort would need to begin with the spectacular discoveries of the Polish expedition, led by Michalowski, which uncovered among desert sands along the Nile the great cathedral at Faras, almost entirely intact. The walls had three layers of plaster, each covered with frescoes. In all there were more than 160 frescoes, of which about half were recovered in a condition permitting display. (Just over fifty of these are now on display in the National Museum in Warsaw, and the remainder may be seen in the National Museum in Khartoum.) In addition, the

Cathedral walls yielded over 400 inscriptions or graffiti, in Greek, Coptic, and Old Nubian, including a list of the bishops of Faras from AD 707 to 1169.<sup>18</sup> At Kasr Ibrim, archaeologists led by Plumley of Cambridge found manuscript fragments scattered over the floor of the cathedral, apparently the remains of the cathedral library, including fragments in Nubian of the Gospel of John, I Corinthians, and Revelation. Nearby were fragments of Isaiah and Jeremiah in Coptic, and of the Gospel of Mark in Greek.<sup>19</sup> Among other interesting discoveries were the ecclesiastical parchments found buried with one of the bishops, Timotheos, which proved to be his ordination documents from the Coptic Patriarch of Egypt, dated in the 1370s.<sup>20</sup> A copy of a letter from the Muslim ruler of Egypt to the Nubian government, dated 758, appears to be the oldest extended document in Arabic in existence anywhere.<sup>21</sup> From Christian Nubian remains at the village of Meinarti, Adams was able to establish a pottery chronology covering 800 years of Nubian Christian history, now a standard index for archaeological dating in the period.<sup>22</sup>

Early reports on the Nubian Christian discoveries began to appear in scholarly journals in the 1960s. The 1970s saw publication of major comprehensive reports. Evaluation of the discoveries so far tends to predominate in the literature of the 1980s, though final reports on the various archaeological efforts have not all yet been published. Scholarly interest has been sustained and channeled not least through a series of international conferences, each followed by publication of the papers there given, and through the International Society for Nubian Studies, which grew out of these conferences and is now the principal focal point of ongoing scholarly cooperation in the field. These conferences and their resulting publications have come to mark out the course of scholarly discussion in the past fifteen years. The first conference took place in Essen, Germany, in 1969. The second meeting, in Warsaw in 1972, saw organization of the

International Society for Nubian Studies. The conferences since have been at: Chantilly, France, in 1975; Cambridge, England, in 1978; and Heidelberg, Germany, in 1982.<sup>23</sup> The next conference is scheduled for Uppsala, Sweden, in August, 1986.<sup>24</sup>

Those looking for up-to-date authoritative material on Christian Nubia in English will find that the most complete and readable treatment remains the three chapters devoted to Christian Nubia in the massive volume **Nubia: Corridor to Africa**, by William Y Adams.<sup>25</sup> Another basic treatment appears in the second volume of the **Cambridge history of Africa**, contributed by P L Shinnie.<sup>26</sup> A third valuable study in English will be found in the second volume of the UNESCO series **General History of Africa**, contributed by K Michalowski.<sup>27</sup> (Apparently additional authoritative articles on Christian Nubia may be expected in succeeding volumes of the UNESCO series.) Researchers will find solid guidance to further literature on the subject in the extensive notes provided by Adams and Michalowski, and in the selected bibliography on Christian Nubia at the end of the Cambridge volume.<sup>28</sup> Beyond this the serious inquirer will want to explore the numerous articles (in various languages) in the volumes accompanying the international scholarly conferences mentioned above.<sup>29</sup> One would also want to keep an eye on the new journal (till now only one issue, in 1982) **Nubia Christiana** (Warsaw).<sup>30</sup> A standard review of current research and publication on ancient Nubia was included in successive surveys by J Leclant, "Fouilles et travaux en Egypt et au Soudan", published in **Orientalia** from 1971 onward, and continued from 1978 by P van Moorsel and J Debergh. Professor van Moorsel informs me that he hopes to continue these surveys in the new journal **Nubian Letters** (Leiden).<sup>31</sup> Those needing to find their own way into the more remote data will find ready access through these principal sources.

Most of the literature so far mentioned would prove too technical for the acquisition interests of theological

libraries in Africa. Not so the recent popular contribution of G Vantini, **Christianity in the Sudan** (Bologna, 1981). Fully familiar with earlier research on Nubian Christianity, and building on a thorough review of ancient and often obscure oriental written sources, Vantini is also abreast of the latest archaeological findings.<sup>32</sup> He includes 35 well-selected photographs from the archaeological discoveries, 7 maps, and a useful chronological table. The book is also valuable for a section on the Christian church in modern Sudan, Catholic and Protestant, which has suffered so much under Islamic harassment since independence up to the immediate present--though Vantini, resident in Khartoum, allows himself to touch on these matters only briefly and cautiously. While the book maintains a relatively popular style throughout, one must acknowledge a tendency to throw together odds and ends of data in long unintegrated sections, which are consequently not very readable. All the same, Vantini's work certainly deserves to be in every serious theological library in Africa. The publishers generously inform me that they will make copies available to the libraries of theological colleges in Africa at a discount.<sup>33</sup>

The most serious deficiency of Vantini's study is that it is not an adequate guide to the modern scholarly resources. No bibliography is provided, and the specific references to sources scattered through the notes prove an incomplete index to the relevant literature. As a result, the book cannot serve the serious student as an entrance to more detailed inquiry. Indeed there is no popular survey to which one could be referred for this purpose. For this particular deficiency I have attempted to provide partial compensation in this paper.

Among the major questions which continue to exercise Nubian Christian research are when and how Christianity began there, and even more puzzling when and why it became extinct. According to a report contemporary

with the events, by the Greek ecclesiastical writer John of Ephesus, the most northern Nubian kingdom was successfully evangelized by Byzantine missionaries under the emperor Justinian about AD 540, followed by the conversion of the other two Nubian kingdoms further south within the next few years. This has long been given by standard works as the date when Nubian Christianity began. But archaeologists have now uncovered evidence of Christianity in Nubia predating 540, including a humble church of unbaked bricks at Faras perhaps from as early as the middle of the preceding century, and Christian correspondence at Qasr Ibrim which seems to be from the same period.<sup>34</sup> Apparently Christianity had already penetrated the lower classes some generations before the official national conversion reported by John of Ephesus. This is not surprising, since intercourse with Egypt was constant, and a Christian bishopric had existed at Philae, on Egypt's border with Nubia, from early in the fourth century. In any case changes in burial customs indicate a rapid adoption of Christianity not only by the ruling classes but also by the common people of Nubia in the latter half of the sixth century.

The question when Christianity ended in Nubia is more perplexing. Conventional wisdom has used the date of 1317, when a church at Dongola, capital of the middle Nubian kingdom, was reputedly turned into a mosque, suggesting the collapse of Christian Nubia early in the fourteenth century. A Muslim ruler did ascend the throne at Dongola for the first time in the 1320s. But recent research has shown that the building in which the mosque in question was set up was not a church but a palace, and that churches continued in Dongola after this mosque had been established in the king's quarters--which suggests a Muslim ruler not intending to alienate his Christian subjects (a situation similar to that in Egypt for some centuries following the Islamic conquest). The formal ordination documents for Bishop Timotheos from the 1370s suggests continuing organized church life well after the first

Muslim assumed the throne.

A more recent theory appearing in standard histories is that Christianity ended with the overthrow in 1504 of Alwa, the southern Nubian kingdom centered at Soba near modern Khartoum. But modern opinion now tends to concur with the argument that we do not know when the Christian kingdom of Alwa fell, but that it happened some time before 1504, a date actually applying not to the fall of Soba but to the founding of a successor Islamic state.<sup>35</sup> Archaeologists have now come up with solid material evidence that a Nubian Christian sub-kingdom in one part of Nubia was still functioning officially, with king and bishop, as late as 1484.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps then, Christian Nubia as a political entity ended sometime close to 1500. How much longer small communities of Christians may have survived in Islamic Nubia is another question. A sixteenth century Portuguese missionary in Ethiopia, Alvarez, reports a Nubian delegation arriving there in the 1520s to beg the Ethiopians to supply them with trained religious leaders--which the Ethiopians felt unable to do. Another report of the period mentions a group of Nubians who were "neither Christians, Muslims, nor Jews, but they live in the desire of being Christians." As late as 1742 the Nubian servant of a Franciscan in Cairo reported a single isolated Christian community still existing in his homeland, in the region of the Third Cataract, despite persecution.<sup>37</sup>

Why, then, did Nubian Christianity finally collapse, after more than a thousand years of sometimes vigorous existence? On close inspection the scholars have concluded that there are no simple answers. Though external pressures played a key role, it did not fall to direct military conquest. Archaeologists find very few Nubian churches that had been converted into mosques or destroyed by violence; rather the churches fell into disuse and were abandoned.<sup>38</sup> It is a complex story. The Muslim rulers of Egypt had made a treaty

with the Nubians in 650, which kept relations more or less manageable for six hundred years. But when the militant Mameluke rulers seized power in Egypt about 1260, they adopted a hostile stance towards Nubia. This coincided with a period of dynastic struggles within Nubia, which the Mamelukes exploited, inducing persisting instability in Nubia, and leading eventually to erosion of the military prowess and political coherence which had so long protected the country.

At about the same time the nomadic tribes of the desert to the east, infiltrated and Islamized by unprecedented waves of immigration from Arabia, began to press upon and threaten Nubia as well. Competing Nubian factions sought advantage by alliance with the leadership of some of these tribes, and relations were confirmed by strategic marriages, so that in due course offspring raised as Muslims assumed key roles in Nubian society by natural legal and social processes, and eventually the throne itself. Meanwhile the restless Islamized tribes of the desert began to crowd against and spill over the Nubian defenses, defenses for centuries effectively organized to control immigration pressures southward along the Nile from Arab Egypt, but unable to prevent overwhelming nomadic infiltration from the desert. The indigenous populations eventually found themselves reduced to isolated enclaves in the midst of a sea of Arabized nomadic tribes, which the Nubian military and political structures, already destabilized by external interference and compromised by internal dynastic struggles and alliances, could not contain. It seems that, under such pressures, what was left of Nubian society became demoralized, fell apart, and eventually disappeared into the populations that had overrun it. Nubian Christianity simply followed in the course of this social disintegration.

Why? Scholarship has suggested several reasons.<sup>39</sup> For one thing, it seems that Nubian Christianity had lost much of its spiritual vitality. Archaeologists note how the churches of Nubia in the later centuries become

progressively smaller and unassuming, as the residences of the ruling class become more elaborate. In addition the laity became increasingly distanced from the central religious events, as the mediating role of the clergy came to occupy the entire church experience--literally in fact, for, in the evolution of Nubian church architecture, in the end there was no space for the laity left in the church sanctuary; they were relegated to the outside, with the church proper reserved for the functions of the clergy. Sacerdotalism had got out of hand. Also church and state were always deeply intermingled in Nubia. Kings held priestly status, and bishops exercised political functions. Given such arrangements, when the political structures collapsed, the church was inevitably entangled in the ruin. Furthermore, like so many churches of the period, the Nubian church through the centuries had, under pressure of social conformity, largely lost touch with its spiritual roots. The models of its life were not constantly placed under the judgment of an apostolic standard. When the final crisis came, a deep overlay of traditions had rendered the resources of a vital biblical Christianity inaccessible.

The gradual disintegration of Nubian Christianity must also be attributed to the persisting isolation from the larger Christian family which it suffered. The Muslim conquests of the earlier centuries had made contact with international Christianity difficult. Relations with the Coptic community in Egypt were close, but the Copts were not in theological fellowship with the larger body of Christendom. When the Mamelukes savagely suppressed the Coptic Church in the thirteenth century, and at the same time turned hostile towards Nubia, Nubian Christianity was left stranded, largely forgotten by its sister churches. It is noteworthy that, though both the Coptic and Ethiopian churches were represented at the great ecumenical Council of Florence (1439-45), no one at the Council seems to have noticed the absence of representatives from Nubia.

Finally, it appears the Nubian church could not survive because through the centuries it had depended for leadership on outside sources, and had failed to develop the means for generating trained leadership locally. When it therefore lost contact with the Coptic Patriarchate, it suffered a fatal blow. Its dependency on external arrangements for leadership preparation proved fatal. When the voice of Nubian Christianity is last heard in history, it is requesting priests from Ethiopia. These were not forthcoming--and Nubian Christianity was never heard from again.

But perhaps on reflection it is amazing that Nubian Christianity lasted as long as it did, surrounded as it was for so many centuries by hostile forces, afflicted by internal crises, and cut off from easy contact with fellow believers. Granted the failings, granted the erosions, is it not something that, even with a limited understanding of and response to the demands of the Christian message, they nevertheless managed to stand faithful generation after generation? Taking due warning from their experiences, must we not also with all empathy and humility "hold such in honour"? Is not here indeed a true and noble heritage for African Christianity, to be rejoiced in, to be learned from, a heritage worthy of much closer acquaintance than has hitherto been its lot? This paper has barely touched the surface of what is now known about Nubian Christianity thanks to the recent remarkable advances in research. And much more may yet come to light--archaeology has only begun the systematic exploitation of potential Christian Nubian sites. Here are rich opportunities for dedicated field research, for learned dissertations and theses, and for thoughtful presentations and popularizations, not least in the handling of African church history in our theological colleges. Will African Christianity take up the quest? Will the day soon come when Nubian Christianity can no longer be called a neglected heritage?

## Notes

1 Note how the notion has slipped inadvertently into an analysis by the noted African church historian Ogbu Kalu of Nigeria, when he writes: "Certainly some parts of Africa, the Maghrib for example, were touched by the medieval Christianization process and other parts experienced the Christian incursion in the Renaissance period, but the major part of Africa witnessed the incursion only in the recent past" ("Doing Church History in Africa Today" *Church History in an Ecumenical Perspective*, ed L. Vischer [Bern, 1982] 86).

Another contemporary African Christian scholar, Kwame Bediako of Ghana, has written, "Islam can also, with greater weight than Christianity, claim deeper historical roots in Africa" ("Gospel and Contemporary Culture", *The Gospel and Contemporary Ideologies and Cultures* [Lagos, 1979] 30). If "deeper historical roots" means older roots, the statement is of course in error. African Christianity is much older than Islam. If the statement means that historically the roots of Islam have penetrated deeper into the African soil, it is difficult to see how roots could be put deeper than Christianity has done historically in Egypt and Ethiopia. Probably the thought behind the statement is not that Islam is older or has been more deeply rooted in Africa, but that historically such in-depth rooting has been more widespread for Islam than for Christianity in Africa. That is not what the statement says. But if that is what was meant, a case could certainly be made for it, and one that African Christianity needs to ponder. And yet even here one must express himself cautiously, for south of the Sahara the in-depth rooting of Islam, beyond the governing circles out among the common people, is in many places only a matter of the last few centuries (e.g. for most of northern Nigeria only since dan Fodio's jihad at the beginning of the 1800s), and in not a few places it is a development of this century. In most cases only from the Sahara northward and along the East African coast are deep Islamic roots more than half a millennium old.

2 *African Religions and Philosophy* (NY, 1969) 229.

3 *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Achimota, 1985).

4 For the texts on Africa church history in common use among theological colleges on the continent, see "A Survey of Textbooks Used in Theological Colleges in Africa" *ACTEA Tools and Studies No. 4* (Nairobi, 1983) 6.

5 (Vol I, II: Cairo, 1935; Vol III, IV: Cairo, 1957).

6 (*Orientalia Cristiana Analecta* 118; Rome, 1938).

7 In contrast, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* includes an article on "Nubia", by B. G. Trigger (Volume X [Washington, DC, 1967] 548-49), which makes reference both to Monneret de Villard and to the UNESCO PROJECT.

8 J. A. Ilevbare's "Christianity in Nubia" (Early African Christianity, *Tarikh* ii.1 [London, 1967])--which first introduced me to this fascinating topic--shows no awareness of the UNESCO discoveries, depending on Arkell, Groves, and Wallis Budge. But the publishers included with the article tantalizing photographs of the Faras cathedral discoveries.

9 OT Hebrew uses "Cush", which the LXX, except in the ethnographic lists of Genesis and I Chronicles, mostly translates by the Greek "Aithiopia". The AV and RSV follow the LXX, translating the Hebrew "Cush" by the English "Ethiopia" in most cases. But since "Ethiopia" denotes a different geographical region today, some current English versions now translate "Cush" as "Nubia", which for modern usage is the technically correct designation for the area intended.

10 *Natur Quaest* vi.8.

11 Cf. P. Bowers "Paul and Religious Propaganda in the First Century", *Novum Testamentum* xxii (1980) 316-323.

12 See B. M. Metzger, "The Christianization of Nubia and the Old Nubian Version of the New Testament", *Historical and Literary Studies* (Grand Rapids, 1968) 111-122; *ibid*, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford, 1977) 268-74.

- 13 Groves, II.82-83.
- 14 A. J. Arkell, "A Christian Church and Monastery at Ain Farah, Darfur" *Kush* vii (1959) 115-19; "The Mediaeval History of Darfur" *SNR* x1 (1959) 44-47; "The Influence of Christian Nubia in the Chad Area between AD 800 - 1200", *Kush* xi (1963) 315-19.
- 15 R. Gray, "Christian Traces and a Franciscan Mission in the Central Sudan, 1700-1711", *Journal of African History* viii (1967) 383-93; cf. A. B. Mathews, "The Kisra Legend", *African Studies* ix (1950) 144-47.
- 16 M. Nissen, *An African Church is Born* (Copenhagen, 1968) 17.
- 17 The standard popular account is in R. Keating, *Nubian Rescue*, London, 1975; cf. M. S. Drower, *Nubia: A Drowning Land* (Harlow, 1970); W. B. Emery, *Lost Land Emerging* (New York, 1967). For the Ghana expedition see P. L. Shinnie, "The University of Ghana Excavations at Debeira West", *Kush* xii (1964) 212-14.
- 18 K. Michalowski, *Faras, Centre Artistique de la Nubie Chretienne* (Leiden, 1966); *ibid.*, *Faras, die Kathedrale aus dem Mustensand* (Zurich/Cologne, 1967).
- 19 J. M. Plumley and C. H. Roberts, "An Uncial Text of St Mark in Greek from Nubia" *JTS* xxvii (1976) 34-45.
- 20 J. M. Plumley, *The Scrolls of Bishop Timotheos* (London, 1975).
- 21 J. M. Plumley, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 1xi (1975) 241-5
- 22 W. Y. Adams, "An Introductory Classification of Christian Nubian Pottery", *Kush* x (1962) 245-88; *ibid.* "The Evolution of Christian Nubian Pottery", *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit*, ed. E. Dinkler (Recklinghausen, 1970) 111-28.
- 23 The publications related to these meetings, from Essen to Cambridge, are respectively: E. Dinkler, ed. *Kunst* and

**Geschichte Nubiens in Christlicher Zeit** (Recklinghausen, 1970); K. Michalowski, ed. **Nubia: Recentes Recherches** (Warsaw, 1975); [J. Leclant and J. Vercoutter, eds.] **Etudes Nubiennes** (Cairo, 1978); J. M. Plumley, **Nubian Studies**, (Warminster, 1982). Not part of the same series of conferences and publications, but nevertheless of equal importance were the "Colloquium on Nubian Studies" at the Hague in 1979, and its attendant volume: P. van Moorsel, ed. **New Discoveries in Nubia** (Leiden, 1982).

24 Information on the International Society for Nubian Studies, may be secured from its secretary, Prof. Dr. Paul van Moorsel, Groenoord 136, 2401 AH--Alphen a/d Rijn, Netherlands. Information on the Uppsala conference in 1986 may be obtained from the secretary of the organizing committee, Prof. Tomas Hagg, University of Bergen, Dept of Classics, PO Box 23, 5014 Bergen, Norway.

25 (Princeton, 1977) 433-546.

26 "Christian Nubia", **Cambridge History of Africa, Vol 2: From C. 500 BC to AD 1050**, ed J. D. Fage (Cambridge, 1978) 556-588; (see also the discussion in Vol 3: 69-80.

27 "The Spreading of Christianity in Nubia", **General History of Africa, Vol II: Ancient Civilizations of Africa**, ed. G. Mokhtar (Paris, 1981) 326-38.

28 764-66.

29 See note 23 above.

30 Published by the Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, U1. Dewajtis 3, 01-653 Warsaw, Poland.

31 Subscription information may be obtained from: Karel Innemee, Doelensteeg 16, Leiden, Netherlands. One may also want to consult the bibliographic survey of literature arising from the UNESCO project in: L-A Christophe, **Campagne Internationale de l'Unesco pur la sauvegarde des sites et monuments de Nubie** (Paris, 1977).

32 Among Vantini's earlier publications were **The Excavations at Faras** (Bologna, 1970), **Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia** (Heidelberg and Warsaw, 1975), and an account of Nubian Christianity in Arabic, **Tar'ikh al-Masihiya** (Khartoum, 1978)-- upon which the 1981 book in English is substantially but not entirely based.

33 Copies may be ordered from Editrice Missionaria Italiana, Via Roncati 32, 40134 Bologna, Italy. The price is \$13, but the publishers inform me that theological libraries in Africa will be allowed a 30% discount. They also state that the supply of copies is now limited.

34 J. M. Plumley, "The Christian Period in Nubia as represented on the Site of Qasr Ibrim", **Nubia, Recentes Recherches**, ed K. Michalowski (Warsaw, 1975), 101-110.

35 Based on reevaluation of the evidence by P. M. Holt, "A Sudanese Historical Legend: the Funj Conquest of Suba" **BSOAS** xxiii (1960) 1-17.

36 N. B. Millet, "Gebel Adda Preliminary Report, 1965-66", **Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt**, vi (1967) 53-62; W. Y. Adams, **Nubia** (Princeton, 1977) 533; J. M. Plumley, "New Light on the Kingdom of Dotawo", **Etudes Nubiennes** (Paris 1978) 231-41.

37 W. Y. Adams, "The Twilight of Nubian Christianity", **Nubia: Recentes Recherches**, ed. K. Michalowski (Warsaw, 1975) 11-17.

38 Of some 150 Nubian churches so far identified, less than a half dozen had been converted at some time into mosques.

39 In addition to the important article by Adams referred to in note 37 above, see, e.g., W. H. C. Frend, "Nomads and Christianity in the Middle Ages", **Journal of Eccl. Hist** xxvi (1975) 209-21; J. S. Trimingham, **Islam in the Sudan** (London, 1949) 75-80; G. Vantini, **Christianity in the Sudan** (Bologna, 1981) 206-07; Y. F. Hasan, **Sudan in Africa** (Khartoum, 1971) 124-28.

# **BIBLICAL BASIS FOR FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP**

Titus M. Kivunzi

## **Introduction**

A joke that carries a lot of weight has always been, "Man made money, money made man mad". This is looking at money from the secular point of view. But from the biblical point of view there is nothing wrong with money, but with the love of it. "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil . . ." (I Tim. 6:10).

One thing that concerns me is the attitude that many Christian workers have adopted towards money. A lot of people think that their need is money rather than what they need to buy with it. There is a desire to have money or a cheque book in the pocket all the time, so that if one does not have it, it is a bother to him or her. As a result of this, several things have been attempted in order to make sure that there is money in the pocket all the time.

1. Advancing salaries for those who are working, just a few weeks following the month and payment.
2. Taking loans bit by bit from the Church funds.
3. Spending public money little by little with the

intention of paying back at the end of the month, which usually ends up being a case of misappropriation. This is often practised by those in leadership positions where money is handled quite often.

4. Establishing a small scale business in the name of "tent making". This applies to church workers in particular, whose sole responsibility should be shepherding the flock.

Money has become the first item on the agenda of many church councils. It has become the first information to be sought for by those who are seeking for employment with the church. How much are you going to offer me? Some have even mentioned their academic qualifications in connection with the question. One wonders what academic achievement has in common with I Tim. 5:17. This sickening and unbiblical attitude has prompted me to suggest four areas in relation to money which every steward of the Lord should be familiar with.

**Definition: Knowledge of What Money Is Helps Us Develop the Right Attitude Toward It.**

"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity" (Eccl. 5:10). (All the Bible quotations in this paper are from The New American Standard Bible)

When we talk about money we are talking about anything that is generally accepted as a medium of exchange, a measure of value, as is indicated in Webster's **New World Dictionary of the American Language**, Second College Edition. We are talking about something whose value can be enjoyed only when the possessor releases it in exchange for the item that meets his real need. This real need is to be seen in the light of the glory and honour of the Lord. As long as money remains in the possessor's pocket, the last part of a person to be saved, it is useless, for it cannot otherwise be

spent. When this is not clear we refrain from giving it to aid the right course or not giving it at all for any course. We hoard it and the result is that it rusts. "Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire . . ." (James 5:3a). No faithful steward would leave people uninformed concerning this tragedy. Therefore, it is imperative for a minister of the Word of the Lord to know what money is.

### **Knowledge of Real Need Eliminates Mere Want.**

Covetousness and want are twin brothers if not one thing. The reason for this is that people who covet things are normally the people who own things. It is difficult for someone genuinely destitute to covet. He needs something because he does not have anything. But the coveters always look for an additional supply to what they already have and are hoarding. This is hard to accept, but it is what goes on in the coveter's mind. A good example of this type is Achan who caused Israel's defeat at Ai. When Joshua cared enough to confront him, this is what he said: "When I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinae and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it" (Joshua 7:21). Achan was not destitute at all. One obvious thing is that he had a tent to live in. I believe he had clothing and food to eat. He should have been content. "And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (I Tim. 6:8). Ananias and his wife Sapphira provide another example of covetousness. This couple had more than they needed, but because they had not learned to release their possessions, they "fried themselves with their own oil" by coveting what already belonged to God (Acts 5:1-11).

A few years ago I received a letter from the

bookkeeper of a large denomination saying that he was fired by the church after an allegation that he misappropriated the church finances. He said to me, "People say that some money is missing and I must know where it is". Unlike Achan he resisted when he was confronted. This person as I knew him was one of the well-to-do people materially speaking. He was probably richer than the church he robbed. The point is that he wanted money because he had no knowledge of what need is. He thought what he had was need, but it was covetousness.

Mere desire for riches brings hurt to the person. "When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?" (Eccl. 5:11). "There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt" (Eccl. 5:13). It brings hurt because the person will never have enough to meet his wants, and what he has will keep disappearing. This means continuous want in continuous disappearing. Paul points out that "those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For to love money is to call upon us a piercing pang" (I Tim. 6:9-10).

#### **Knowledge of the Owner of Money Provides Guidance to the Possessor in the Use of It.**

When the church bookkeeper I referred to wrote to tell me what the church was saying, I wrote to ask him to tell me what he was saying about the missing money. This is what he said: "Before this allegation I had had the books audited by people who are *well qualified* and are *recognized by the government*. But I don't know those other auditors who told the church that some money is missing." It is obvious that this person was responding to my question from the legal point of view, while my question was a moral one. Having an idea that he had knowledge of the missing money, this is what I

wrote to him: "I believe that both the government auditors as well as those of the church are well qualified. But the government is losing money month after month in the presence of these specialists. The point is, what does the Heavenly Auditor know about the money?" To this question he did not respond and I concluded that the problem with this bookkeeper was that he just saw organizational money, but he did not see the God of Haggai, who said, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (2:8). Money is God's just as those who use it are His. All financial records are well kept by Him. It does not require training to audit every single cent which we possess on earth. If then we limit our handling of it within the human organization and fail to see the Heavenly Owner of it, we fall into the same trap as Achan. Because He possesses material wealth, He commands that those who possess it be instructed not to be conceited or to fix their hope on its uncertainty, but to fix their hope on God, who supplies us with all things to enjoy. He goes on to say that they should not only learn to hope in God but they should also be willing to share what they have generously. And by so doing they "store up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future" (I Tim. 6:17-19). If our finances do not go to the heavenly store, they are either not used at all, in which case they are hoarded, or they are misused. Either way God is not glorified and therefore woe to the possessor of it for it is but rust. In Psalm 127:2 we read, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labours; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep." And in Ecclesiastes 5:12 we read, "The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep." When God is not revered in our receiving as well as spending of money, our labour is in vain, and our life is restless. As stewards of the Lord we need to recognize that we do not get money simply because we are working, but because God is involved in providing for us. Sleep to a poor labourer, in this sense "poor

in spirit," is sweet and gives him tranquility, but to the rich it is the reverse. He is sleepless because he is concerned that he might lose what he has, as well as concerned about how to get more than what he already has. All this is because he does not acknowledge the One who owns silver and gold. To acknowledge that He is never without silver and gold and that any time we spend what we have for the right course, we are actually lending to Him. "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17).

It must be realized that in this paper I am not trying to exegete the Bible; rather, I am pulling out the absolute truths to point out that God is the owner of our finances and any use or misuse of them has inevitable consequences to the one handling them. God forbid that we should think that money belongs to us just because it bears images and signatures of human beings. Yes, He has given it to us to use and to control its usage, but we are not the originators of it. It is His and for Him it must be spent.

#### **Knowledge of Money in Relation to Eternity Controls our Future Motives Toward It.**

There is one person in the Bible who, according to my understanding, had a clear understanding of his relationship with material possession. This man is Job. No sooner had Job received the final report that all he had, including his children, was no more, than he realized that he had two things remaining. The first thing was the hair. When Job came from his mother's womb he was naked, possibly with little hair. The second thing was clothing. Job remembered that when he was born he had no covering on his body. For this reason he arose, tore his robe and shaved his head, and he worshiped, then said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there . . ." (1:20,21). This is the same message Paul the Apostle is getting across to us: "We brought nothing into the

world, so we cannot take anything out of it either" (I Tim. 6:7). Our attitudes and behaviour toward money seem to suggest that there is a fear of becoming poorer than we were when we came into the world. Therefore, we tend either to seek after godliness in order to become financially rich, or to keep whatever we have no matter what our needs are. The Apostle says that this is based on a misunderstanding. He says that the supposition that godliness is a means of gain is untrue. But to be godly is to be rich spiritually and to be content with having our basic needs met. Such a life attitude would lead us into the knowledge of the following facts:

1) One cannot be poorer than he was when he was born, Job 1:20-21.

2) We brought nothing to this earth. Therefore, riches are not the origin nor the end of man, I Tim. 6:7.

3) Godliness accompanied by contentment is great gain, 6:6.

4) Food and covering is all we need to supplement our natural state the time we came to the earth, 6:8.

5) We need to flee the destruction brought about by the love of money, 6:9-11.

6) We ought to pursue the spiritual values of life, 6:11b.

7) In faith fight every battle of want that may come our way or need that we really have, 6:12.

F - Forsaking or Forgetting

A - All

I - I

T - Trust

H - Him

8) We must adorn the doctrine and avoid the "iniquity of the holy things in the ministry, 6:14; cf. Titus 2:10; Ex. 28:38.

9) We need to be willing to instruct and to be instructed concerning the wise handling of financial or material possessions, 6:17-19.

10) Since there is no **automatic** victory over temptation in this area of finance, it is imperative that stewards **learn** to be content in all circumstances: In humble means and in prosperity. This is a secret to be learned by Christians, Phil. 4:10-12.

11) We can succeed by trusting the Lord who alone can accomplish the impossible for us, Phil. 4:13.

12) Let us give to the Lord by supporting His ministry for which He called us, and by caring for that which He has entrusted to our care, Prov. 19:17; II Cor. 9:6-15. For it is more blessed to give than to receive, and the Lord loves a cheerful giver (Acts 20:35; II Cor. 9:7). A cheerful giver is a cheerful user, and a careful manager of church finances. To this end tithing and offerings are not an option for Christians, Malachi 3:10ff.

If we fail to observe these things, our stewardship is going to be either like that of the unfaithful servant (Luke 19:20-27), or that which we are warned of by the prophet Isaiah (55:2), "spending money for what is not bread, and . . . wages for what does not satisfy," or even worse than this, that of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11. I realize that these verses may be out of their context, but the underlying principle is that we are responsible for the way we give to the Lord and the way we use and for what reason we use what is given.

It is through failing to put into practice these Biblical teachings concerning finance that many Christians live in perpetual debt. They either put

the church into enormous debts or get into unremovable debts themselves. Borrowing beyond our ability to pay back at the agreed time, in order to build larger churches, gymnasiums, or our own houses, is wrong. It is wrong because the borrower becomes the lender's slave and it destroys relationships (Prov.22:7). It is wrong because it is an easy way to get money, but a hard way to repay it. A good adage regarding this is, "Borrowing is wedding, paying is mourning". It is wrong because it doubles the debt, when the Bible encourages us not to owe anyone anything except love, Romans 13:8. Because of fear that the lender may demand his money back, the borrower's love becomes imperfect (I John 4:18). Without love our journey is unpleasant because while there remain three (faith, hope and love), the greatest of these is love (I Cor. 13:13).

Again note three dangers brought about by the love of money:

1. Hindrance to the gospel (Mat. 28:12, 15). Note that these soldiers were given "a large sum of money". The purpose of this "generous" giving was to support the falsehood that Jesus did not rise from the grave, but that his disciples took him away. The result of receiving this money was that "the story was widely spread". Anybody who is out for large sums of money has ceased to preach the gospel because it condemns his desires.

2. Violation of God's principle (Prov. 22:7). The rich rules over the poor. The lender rules over the borrower. The result is slavery. This is why it is absolutely wrong and unbiblical to borrow money from the secular source to do the work of God.

3. Destruction of the lover (I Tim. 6:10).

Therefore, as Christians we must do something about our material needs:

1. Accept God's invitation to the market place. Is. 55:1; Luke 9:3. In this place no exchange is necessary. Only faith in God is necessary. But the problem is, are we willing to go?

2. Accept God's teaching in I Tim. 6:6-8, with special emphasis on verse 7.

3. Accept God's promise, Heb. 13:15.

This is of course a biblical response to the question so often raised, How much money is enough?

In conclusion, I believe that there are three things every steward of God needs to know and apply to the ministry:

1) God's steward must ask himself, What is the real need that I or we have? It is interesting that we think we need money, but, as I said before, the only way to use money is to let it go out of our pockets; man's need is not money. What man needs is what he wants to exchange with the medium money. If we can have food without money, we would escape many temptations connected with love of money. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). If we would wake up every morning and find that all we have on the dining table is bread, our prayer would change to "Give us this day some money to buy milk, jelly, or peanut butter" instead of asking for the supply of these things. We require God to give us money instead of praying to get what we need. I believe that this is the attitude we grow up with. But we should learn that our need is not money, rather what we intend to exchange with it. That is what we should ask God to give us. If He gives money, praise Him and use it for that purpose. If He provides milk in a container, thank him and don't ask for money.

2) Budgeting our church finance. If we know what

the need is, let us make plans. John C. Bramer, Jr., in his book **Efficient Church Business Management**, says that the church budget has three purposes: a) It functions as a guide. In other words it is a plan or operation for a given period of time. It helps tell the reader what is anticipated. Without budgeting any need is a big need and money will keep on disappearing through petty needs. Without budgeting the congregation does not know what is the real need and the giving is likely to come to a halt. b) It functions as an authorization for the collecting of income and expenditures of resources. It guards the person handling it against stretching his tentacles beyond his province of authority. c) It functions as a control. That is, it serves as an assurance that the income of the church is being used properly.

3) The third thing which God's steward needs to take seriously is auditing the church finances. An annual checkup seems to be a reasonable practice. Auditing has two main purposes: to encourage and/or correct the one caring for the public money, which is also a good testimony as well as encouragement to those who give since the report confirms that their funds are in good hands. If these things are not considered and acted upon, the church is in trouble and it may lead to the sin of mishandling God's money.

Some Christians need a more stern warning than others in the area of money. But all of us need to watch lest we find ourselves moving from God to gold. "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity" (Eccl. 5:10).

# GHOSTS

Robert R. Cook

Although a belief in ghosts is found in every culture, the sense of the close proximity of the dead is particularly vivid in African societies; the ongoing existence of the dead is assumed and the intimacy of the extended family reaches out to them as well as to living relatives. Ancestors are believed to offer advice through dreams, visions, or ghostly visitations. When they are seen, they have the same appearance as when they were living. Such sightings are not uncommon, according to Mbiti, for "A considerable number of people report seeing . . . the living-dead, both alone as individuals and in groups with other men or women".<sup>1</sup> The apparitions are not restricted to human form; for example, there are many stories, particularly among the Akamba, of spectral cattle which are heard lowing in the night. Some ghosts are thought to have sinister origins:

It is believed by Africans that a person whose dead body is not buried, that is, with due and correct rites, will not be admitted to the abode of the blessed departed ones, and therefore will become a wanderer, living an aimless, haunting existence . . . This category of wandering spirits includes also those who had been wicked while on earth and are therefore excluded from the fellowship of the good. The haunts of the ghost-spirits are trees, rocks, rivers and watercourses, or hills.<sup>2</sup>

These malevolent spirits may actually cause physical damage. Idowu goes on to conclude,

Modern sophisticated man may wish . . . to dismiss as puerile stories of experiences of ghosts and of haunted places; but deep down in the minds of thousands of men and women of every level of spiritual or intellectual attainment is the . . . persistent notion, that the deceased still have a part to play, for better or worse, in the lives of the living.<sup>3</sup>

Idowu is right. There is a lingering belief in ghosts in even the most sophisticated cultures. Just as in Africa, there are regular reports in the West of ghostly appearances (sometimes of animals or inanimate objects), haunted places and disruptive spirits known as poltergeists. In fact, John Wesley, the father of Methodism, wrote about a mischievous ghost who used to knock on walls, open doors and draw curtains during his boyhood while living in Epworth parsonage. Within the past hundred years, two questionnaires have been sent out in England inquiring whether the recipient had ever experienced a ghost. In 1890, 9.9% of those contacted claimed they had and in 1948, the number rose to 14.3%.

How are we, as Christians, to understand these strange phenomena? Can the dead really appear to the living? Or is it all trickery and hallucination? Or does the responsibility rest with the demonic? This article will explore these questions in the light of Scripture and current research.

### Ghosts in Scripture

There are two common evangelical assumptions about ghosts, namely that the dead are unable to contact the living and that apparitions are disguised demons. Let us consider whether these beliefs are really substantiated by what is to be discovered in Scripture.

The first assumption is found to be based on very weak exegesis; for example, Job 7:9f and 10:21 are sometimes cited, but all these verses teach is that Job was convinced that his miserable earthly existence would terminate irrevocably in the grave: "So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up". But Job's utterances are not infallible and indeed, at times, they border on blasphemy (e.g. 9:14-35). No doctrine, therefore, can legitimately rest on these texts. II Corinthians 5:8 is also sometimes abused. "Absent from the body . . . at home with the Lord" is taken to imply that return to earth is an impossibility. But clearly the verse does not necessarily entail this conclusion. Then, again, we find J. O. Buswell writing, "From the words of Christ as recorded in Luke 16:19-31, we may clearly infer that the spirits of the departed are not to communicate with the living."<sup>4</sup> Really? Leaving aside the issue of whether parables contain theological information beyond the basic point which they are making (cf. the work of Jülicher and Jeremias), we may observe that actually Abraham does not tell Dives that it is impossible or absolutely forbidden for the dead ever to return, merely that it is spiritually useless.

In fact, a case can be made for the acceptance of the reality of ghosts in the Bible. A spectral simile is used in Isaiah 29:4 when the prophet says of the destroyed Jerusalem, "Your voice shall also be like that of a ghost from the ground, and your speech shall whisper from the dust." Then, of course, the risen Jesus allays the disciples' fears that he is a ghost by pointing out that "a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Lk 24:39).

Indeed, Scripture actually records cases of the dead returning. Samuel comes back in I Samuel 28. Admittedly some have followed Luther and Calvin in assuming that demonic deception was involved and Buswell maintains that the medium of Endor was a fraudulent trickster, but surely the most natural

reading of the passage (e.g. v. 15: "Then Samuel said to Saul") leads one to believe that it was really the dead prophet who appeared. Then again, in the New Testament we find Moses and Elijah returning to converse with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Now these cases **may** be unique in the history of the world, but nothing in Scripture requires this conclusion.

The Bible is primarily concerned with warning people not to attempt communication with the dead rather than with affirming that such intercourse is impossible. Mediums should be put to death according to Levitical law (Lev. 20:27). In Israel there was to be a total ban on any "one who calls up the dead" (Deut. 18:11). Again, from verses like this it appears *prima facie* that necromancy is a real possibility, but here the second common evangelical assumption is often introduced, namely, that the divine taboo is so severe because God does not want his people to be duped by demons who impersonate the dead. But is this not again unwarranted eisegesis? There is not one clear example in Scripture of a demon disguising itself as a ghost. Now they may indulge in such practices, after all Satan can appear as an angel of light and presumably could imitate a dead person, but it should be clearly recognized that the assumption that demons do so disguise themselves cannot be grounded in the explicit teaching of Scripture. Why then is God so adamantly opposed to any attempt of the living to contact the dead? In the context of Old Testament theology the reason seems clear enough. The common belief was that Sheol removes man from any relationship with God (cf. Is. 38:11, 18f). "Sheol is not identified with any location, but is rather thought of as a kind of existence, which, in the case of the Hebrews, is basically opposed to God. Sheol is the place of bare survival."<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, a gross insult to the living God to bypass him and seek advice from those who are out of contact with him and in a state of sub-human existence. As the affronted Lord exclaims

through his prophet, "And when they say to you, 'Consult the mediums . . . ', should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?" (Is. 8:19).

This leads us to consider another reason why evangelicals invoke the demonic to explain medium activity. It is observed that putative messages from deceased non-Christians contain no change of belief from their sceptical earthly views; they still do not believe in Christ or Hell. These theologians suggest that the only way to explain this surprising fact is to assume that the messages are not really coming from the dead at all but rather from evil spirits who are bent on leading the human race into doctrinal error.<sup>6</sup> However, there is a much simpler explanation. As the Old Testament passages just observed imply, death does not necessarily increase knowledge or wisdom; in fact the contrary is suggested. The godless dead still await the Resurrection and the Judgement and there is no reason why they should be any more enlightened now than they were when on earth. As M. Perry observes, "Don't think that because they are departed spirits they are either necessarily demonic . . . or necessarily profound."<sup>7</sup>

We may conclude that the Bible neither affirms that it is impossible for the dead to return nor that ghosts are disguised demons. These two shibboleths are founded on tradition rather than Scripture. In fact, the Bible gives clear examples of the dead returning. It is not impossible, however, that evil spirits may sometimes impersonate the deceased and one should always be alert to that possibility. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that in days gone by 'the God of the gaps' was foolishly invoked to explain phenomena beyond current scientific understanding, we must withstand the temptation of resorting simplistically to 'the demon of the gaps' theory to explain strange paranormal phenomena. There have been apparent cases of dead Christians appearing to the living<sup>8</sup> and there seems to

be no good reason for doubting that they could be veridical. Further, as Stafford Wright observes, the Christian departed ". . . may be told when someone they have loved is about to join them, for there are examples of deathbed visions when the one who is dying speaks of the presence of loved ones who have passed on."<sup>9</sup>

### Ghosts in Current Research

In 1882, the Society for Psychical Research was founded in Britain by some eminent scholars. Its aim was, and still is, to investigate apparently inexplicable phenomena, such as ghosts, scientifically. Throughout the past hundred years, well documented cases have been meticulously filed and analysed. Instances of haunted houses have been investigated with scientific equipment and eye witnesses have been carefully interviewed. Much trickery has been exposed and perfectly natural explanations for many cases have been discovered, but there remain a stubborn residue of cases which baffle the natural mind. Nevertheless, theories have been offered by learned members of the Society to account for these well attested reports of apparitions. Let us look at a few of them.

Now the most straightforward theory might seem to be that ghosts are actual materializations of dead people, but there are insuperable problems with this simple hypothesis. The first is that, astonishingly, about half of the reported apparitions are of people who are still alive! Secondly, must we really believe that the spectral cows heard by the Akamba are in fact the spirits of dead beasts? And what of the ghostly inanimate objects (including the apparition's clothes)? Are we going to have to assign spirits to these objects? And what does the corpse of a kanga or a pair of shoes look like? No, a more sophisticated explanation must be sought.

Some theories have sought to avoid the need to

postulate a conscious, incorporeal afterlife. One such hypothesis maintains that all ghosts are, in fact, subjective hallucinations caused by, for example, mental fatigue or an over active imagination. But this theory fails to account for cases where more than one person sees the same spectre, or where the apparition conveys factual information unknown to the recipient, or is of a person unknown to the observer but later correctly identified, for instance, from a photograph of the dead person. Another such hypothesis focuses on the many sightings where the apparitions mindlessly repeat the same gestures. This is typical of ghosts which haunt places and are seen over a period by different people. Each time they repeat the same pantomime. The theory explains this by postulating a sort of 'photograph' which has been impregnated into the atmosphere by the mind of the subject (perhaps since deceased), often while undergoing an emotional crisis. This 'etheric image' can be revitalized by another unwary mind that visits the same spot. In fact, the deceased person is no more present than is an actor in the cinema that is showing the film in which he is the star. However, while focusing on an important characteristic of some apparitions, this theory fails to take account of those ghosts that do act intelligently by relating to the recipient in giving information and so on. There are also well-documented cases of 'crisis apparitions' where, at the moment of death, a figure of the dead person appears to a geographically distant loved one. This theory cannot accommodate crisis apparitions.

The ESP theory has also attracted some. This view assumes the reality of ESP (Extra Sensory Perception), particularly that of telepathy (mind reading). This is another interest of the Psychical Research Society as well as other international scientific bodies. Some apparently impressive results have emerged which seem to suggest that some people sometimes are able to receive impressions from the minds of others without the mediation of the five senses. It is argued by some

that ghostly hallucinations are the result of telepathy. If I see the ghost of an unknown dead person, it is because I am receiving a mental impression from someone who did know that person, including what she looked like and how she spoke. Alternatively, if one accepts the reality of the afterlife, one might argue that it is the dead spirit that is actually telepathically communicating. The major problem with this hypothesis is the fact that the evidence for ESP is ambivalent and at best it is a faculty which is very weak and intermittent in even the best subjects. Yet ghostly images are strong and coherent and sometimes identically observed by a group of people. Is it really credible, Dr. A. Gauld asks in a recent study, "... that persons hitherto not known to be psychically gifted can suddenly develop powers of ESP comparable to, if not exceeding, the most remarkable that have ever been experimentally demonstrated"?<sup>10</sup>

Gauld's own preferred theory is a modification of F.W.H. Myers', a founder member of the Society. At the end of the nineteenth century, the period when Myers was writing, there were numerous reported cases of individuals consciously projecting an image of themselves, an image which was sometimes observed by others. Other cases, it seems, involved an image of a living person who was not consciously projecting. This, according to Myers, was an unconscious or subconscious projection. The former type of image, being the result of a conscious act, exhibited an apparent intelligence and intentionality, while the latter kind was marked by a zombie-like automatism. Myers speculated that apparitions of the dead may be caused either by conscious projections by the dead spirits, in which case the apparitional image would exhibit intentionality, or by unconscious projections (dreams of the dead perhaps) which would be marked by the mindless pantomimes mentioned earlier. He was convinced that the projected images actually modified the space where they were observed.

Gauld alters Myers' theory in the following way. The projection, he argues, need not be in the likeness of the subject; it might be of cattle, or a dead ancestor, or even of a monstrous shape. Nevertheless, it might be caused by a dead spirit (theoretically a deceased person might project an image of a live person). He emphasizes that the image itself is not a vehicle of consciousness, nor is it perceived by simple telepathy, ". . . certain persons in certain circumstances are able so to modify a certain region of space that other persons, visiting that region, may see that figure corresponding to some latent conception in the agent's mind."<sup>11</sup> Those people are not reading the projector's mind but are perceiving a product of that mind. Gauld is only too aware of the vulnerability of this theory and its inadequacy to explain, for example, the nature of the modification in space or the nature of 'non-optical' perception (ghosts cannot, it seems, be photographed) by which one observes the image. The theory contains too many unknowns and yet, for Gauld, it is the most satisfactory so far. As already indicated, it may be adopted and adapted on the one hand by those who wish to deny the ongoing existence of the dead, or deny their ability to communicate with the living, or on the other hand by those who want to affirm that the dead can cause appearances of themselves.

So after a hundred years of intensive research by the finest minds available, ghosts remain an enigma. Gauld himself admits, "It seems to me that at the moment we know about as much of these matters as the Greeks did of electricity when they discovered that if you rub pieces of amber on your sleeve they will pick up straws."<sup>12</sup> That pioneer investigator F.W.H. Myers was probably correct when he wrote, "Whatever else indeed a 'ghost' may be, it is probably one of the most complex phenomena in nature."<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

After this all too brief a survey of the relevant material, both biblical and extra-biblical, let five concluding points suffice:

1. Scripture leaves open the possibility that the dead may communicate with the living. After reviewing a century's work of the Psychical Research Society, Gauld comments, "For myself I can only say that it seems to me that there is . . . a sprinkling of cases which rather forcefully suggest some form of survival."<sup>14</sup> If this is so, one may wonder why apparitions are not more common or why they appear to some people and not to others. Undoubtedly God's permissive will is primary, but perhaps also there are some natural laws involved. Just as some living people are better image transmitters and receivers than others, so perhaps the dead also vary in their ESP abilities to project images (we have already discovered the naivety of the view that ghosts are actual materialized visitations of the dead).

2. In order to 'scratch where it itches', African theologians need to evolve a more subtle theology of the dead than may be discovered in Western textbooks, and this theology will include a doctrine of ghosts. Such scholars should not ignore the important work of the Psychical Research Society. They may find some of the ideas found in the various theories quite suggestive; for example, Africans sometimes report seeing nightmarish forms. Does Gauld's projection hypothesis throw any possible light on this?

3. Scripture is emphatic that any attempt to communicate with the departed is a gross sin against God. All magic and occult practice is totally banned. The Bible thus censures all these aspects of African Traditional Religion. Christians are to have absolutely nothing to do with them. But this is not to

say that the dead are never permitted to communicate with us. It has been suggested by Stafford Wright that there may be a parallel with angels here.<sup>15</sup> They may not be worshipped (Col. 2:18), nor may the ancestors, and neither may prayers (communications) be directed to them, yet on occasions they visit men with information.

4. There is a difference, however. Angels are directly sent by God and their messages are always to be heeded, but even if one is convinced that one has experienced a genuine communication from a dead person, one should not assume that the message is true or wise. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest either that knowledge and wisdom are enhanced by death or, for that matter, that the departed are all around us, aware of everything that we do. Hebrews 12:1 is sometimes misapplied in this context. It does not mean that we are surrounded by a 'crowd of spectators'. The New English Bible clearly brings out the intended meaning by translating 'with all the witnesses to faith around us like a cloud.' Thus we are referred back to the previous chapter where we are challenged by the example of those who remained faithful unto death. We should be ever mindful of the challenge of their dedication, and in this sense they are around us like a cloud.

5. We must avoid being gullible when we hear ghost stories. They may be complete fabrications or, at least, gross exaggerations. The human mind can also play tricks. Put an imaginative, sensitive person into a dark place and he will be convinced he is beholding all sorts of fantastic forms. Striking hallucinations can be induced by fever, frenzied dancing, fumigations, fasting or drugs. Some images may possibly be the creation of demons or could conceivably be the projections of powerful minds, such as those of witchdoctors. Also some cases may be explained with reference to simple trickery. We must finally beware of basing too much on dreams. To paraphrase the seventeenth century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, "When a

man claims that an ancestor spoke to him in a dream,  
this is no more than to say he dreamed that an  
ancestor spoke to him".

## Notes

1. J. S. Mbiti, **African Religions and Philosophy**, (Heinemann, 1969), p. 86.
2. E. B. Idowu, **African Traditional Religion**, (SCM, 1973), pp. 174-175.
3. **Ibid**, p. 178.
4. J. O. Buswell, **A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion**, Vol. II, (Zondervan, 1962), p. 309.
5. W. Dyrness, **Themes in Old Testament Theology**, (Paternoster, 1979), p. 239.
6. This is the assumption found e.g. in M. Unger's, **The Haunting of Bishop Pike**, (Tyndale, 1971).
7. M. Perry, **Psychic Studies - A Christian View**, (Aquarian, 1984), p. 77.
8. E.g. C. S. Lewis to J. B. Phillips - See J. B. Phillips, **Ring of Truth**, (Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), p. 89.
9. J. Stafford Wright, **Christianity and the Occult**, (Scripture Union, 1971), p. 118. A survey of physicians in America indicated that 1 in 27 dying patients reported seeing apparitions [K. Osis, **Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses**, (New York, Parapsychology Foundation, Inc., 1961)].
10. A. Gauld, **Mediumship and Survival**, (Paladin, 1983), p. 235.
11. **Ibid**, p. 255.
12. **Ibid**, p. 260.
13. Quoted in A. Mackenzie's **Hauntings and Apparitions**, (Paladin, 1982), p. 1.
14. Gauld, **Op. cit.**, p. 261.

15. See J. Stafford Wright, 'The Biblical Assessment of Superstition & the Occult', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 4, No. 1, April 1980, pp. 102-113.

# **THE MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH: ROLES AND INVOLVEMENT**

Rev Udobata Onunwa

## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of change is taking such a dramatic dimension today in Africa that the church cannot afford to be insensitive to it. The church has therefore got to sit up to devise a new strategy of mission. The changeless Gospel needs to be communicated to millions of hungry souls in a fast changing world. This problem of change is not confined to the urban centres. Rural communities are tremendously being affected as well. Their aspirations, cosmology, and life style are rapidly being transformed and the cosmos seems to be contracting. A new magazine which appears in the street of London or New York today finds itself in Lagos in less than three days and gets into the hands of a post-primary school teenage boy or girl in a Nigerian village in about two days. So within one week, an incident that took place in Britain gains currency in a local community in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and any other part of Africa.

This paper therefore addresses itself to the challenges and prospects of the ministry in the local church, in Africa today and especially in Nigeria. It would analyse some of the causes of conflict and would posit certain practical steps for a successful pastoral ministry to rural dwellers in contemporary Nigeria. Those already in the ministry would definitely be challenged to see the need for a reassessment of their methods in view of the current existential situation.

Those being prepared for the ministry would, nonetheless, benefit from it as it would equip them for the real life situation which may confront them in their future ministry. It would deal with practical issues of pastoralia, theology and mission.

### The Challenge

In recent years many ministers have been clashing with some committed members of their church. This among other factors has been due to the mode of ministration expected of the pastor by such vibrant and zealous members. Often, a young pastor who holds a degree in theology might be disillusioned to discover in the very local congregation he is sent to that a good number of the Christians there are better qualified than he. Some have been so versed in the Scripture that they need to be challenged by one who has a strong base in the Word of God. This was not the case over twenty years ago when most local congregations were made up of illiterate people who looked on the pastor with awe, respect and admiration. The pulpit then was very much higher than the pew.

Some members are getting very much involved in national and international revival meetings with strong evangelical emphases. Some pastors in the 'Old historic orthodox and conservative churches' with petrified systematic theology may find themselves giving out stale food to hungry men and women whose spiritual appetite needs "hot cake just from the oven". The new wave of evangelical revival spreading in many parts of the world has equally caught some Christians in the local churches. The Gospel does not change but the mode of communication must change. A minister who does not have a theological education with an evangelical background and who finds himself in such a church may find the new spiritual movements too radical to understand or to appreciate. This was the genesis of the clash between many pastors and such evangelical groups like the Scripture Union (S.U.) in

many local congregations in the seventies in Ghana, Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

The young missionaries who evangelized Africa in the past were looked upon by the natives as men and women full of knowledge, power and wisdom. Their colour was an advantage. Today any missionary whose biblical background is not strong may not make much impact on the religious situation in the rural communities in Africa today where many religious sects are springing up. One has got to work hard to retain one's members from being turned into other groups. The best check is serious Bible teaching. The old closed system is fast breaking down and the rate of interaction is increased. This calls for new strategies to the ministry in the local church. Africans must, therefore, as a matter of urgency, become missionaries to themselves. In other words, the remaining task of evangelization of Africa is primarily the responsibility of the African church itself.<sup>1</sup> It does not imply that every local church is going evangelical but there is a new revival motivating people today in the rural communities. We do not intend to suggest that European missionaries are no longer needed in Africa. That is the unchristian nationalistic slogan for **Moratorium and Selfhood** in the wake of the struggle for independence in many African countries. Christianity is a transcendental and incarnate religion which is not culture-bound. Anyone who has been touched by the challenging spirit of the Gospel could minister or share fellowship with believers anywhere.

The local congregation is made up of several classes of people. For purposes of analyses, we would conveniently group them into five functional classes. These include the male adults, the female adults, the youths (young boys and girls who are the firebrand for mission), the children and finally the clergy.<sup>2</sup>

No one belongs to any of these groups by chance or choice. It is God's grace that has purposefully placed

one where one finds one's self. No one is permanently placed in a particular class. No one is insignificant in any particular group. Every member has a role to play. In God's redemptive scheme, no one is insignificant. That is why Peter calls all true believers a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). Paul's imagery of the role of individual members of the Christ's Body is clearly spelt out in 1 Cor. 12:1-11 and needs to be properly applied in the field.

### **Specific Roles and Involvement**

An active church (not an "activist" church) whose top priority is disciple-making cannot afford to ignore the important role every member could play in God's redemptive scheme. The rural community is surprisingly, slowly but steadily, becoming impersonal. This complicates the work of a minister in such a congregation which used to be a closed system but is rapidly being transformed into an impersonal one. He would act like an enabler, whose work involves nurturing, and sustaining every member to become structurally and functionally mature, a responsive, responsible and productive member of the family of God within the community. This would create a self-propagating, self-supporting and self-governing church. The minister does this by mobilising the total membership in the task of disciple-making. In a recent conference of the West African Association of Theological Institutions, (WAATI), the primary concerns were centred on finding alternative methods of training for the ministry. Gone are the days when the laity was content to be mere observers on the stage. The Rev Kenneth Strachan has proposed a thesis that the growth of any movement is in direct proportion to the success of that movement in mobilising its total membership in the constant propagation of its tenet and practices. This growth would therefore be in a geometric progression not mere addition. This thesis is even more relevant today in the local church than ever before. This is because the current craze for cultural

revival in many countries poses a threat to the old pattern of ministry in the local communities where the strength of traditional religion is immense.

The bane of the ministry in the local church in the past was the ignorance of the lay members which made some ministers behave like 'Rev Know-it-all or Do it all', a jack of all trades and master of none.<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that the role of native agency had never been experienced in the local church, but what we have posited is the extension of the involvement of the roles hitherto played by the ordinary member in the pew to run across all the five groups of members we have identified. New avenues should be opened to incorporate the functions of male adult members who have special talent that could be used for the edification of the body of Christ. Those who have special gifts should be allowed to utilize them either for teaching, preaching, or in any other specialized ministry. The women adult members should equally be utilized and any with leadership qualities should be allowed to exercise them. The pastor's wife should no longer be looked upon as the best in all things. The youth is made up of teenage boys and girls who are usually keen on carrying out open air meetings and sing-songs. We have noticed in a few churches that such ministry has challenged many young men and women to seek re-entry into the local congregation from which they broke away. The youth groups have in conjunction with some elders been involved in child evangelism. The children equally contribute in no small way when they organise some door-to-door outreach during the moonlight plays in the village. Such evening plays have often offered them opportunities to learn the Bible, and entertain those who come out to watch. In the church, they find a place where the traditional aspect of social life is given expression.

In this brief analysis, we have noted that no individual is left to sit on the fence. The hub that turns every individual member is the minister. His

encouragement or otherwise goes a long way to shepherd the flock of Christ committed to his charge. Every local congregation has got its own peculiar interests, needs, opportunities, and challenges. It is the ability of the minister to decipher what would serve as stepping stones to fuller evangelism and those that would be obstacles to it. The strategies of mission, therefore, must be relevant to each local need and aspiration. More often than not, most leaders of local congregations who do not have special gifts for praying, preaching, teaching or for music, tend to monopolize or play down the aspect or even hinder those who could contribute in such areas to the growth of the church. It was the failure of Bishop James Johnson in the Niger Delta Diocese (Nigeria) to understand the motivations of the Garrick Braide Movement that led to the great schism in the Anglican Church in the Niger Delta when he declared the group heretical in 1916. The vibrant ministry of the group would have been utilized within the church if the Bishop had properly shepherded them. This group later crystalized into the Christ Army Church which did not continue with the same original zeal.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Practical Steps for Successful Rural Ministry**

The first guide to this should be the appreciation of the changing roles in ministry in the present-day Africa. Bishop B. C. Nwankiti, of the Diocese of Owerri, declared 1980 as the year of Evangelism in his diocese.<sup>5</sup> This is a rural diocese and his action was a positive approach to the challenges of the time. It is in realization of the magnitude of the problem of change in Nigeria today, where the young is especially vulnerable, that the 'participatory' ministry has been introduced in Owerri Diocese. Many of the youths are uncertain of their past, more so of the future that awaits them. Their roots in family and society seem to be threatened, their very identity is at risk. Unemployment and disappointment beckon and their fear of failure and insecurity leads to disillusionment and

cynicism which in turn find expression in acts of immorality and violence.<sup>6</sup> In an endeavour to face these problems and bring healing, reconciliation and peace to the people, a programme which involves lay Christian participation has been introduced. A form of **lay chaplaincy** in some of the schools is aimed at involving Christian men and women of mature faith to bring healing which comes through patient and loving pastoral care as well as a challenging presentation of the claims of the Gospel. A new evangelical strategy which has yielded fruitful harvest in recent years is the revival of open air ministry with the aid of itinerant missionaries from overseas churches for a week or two. In most places, the revival services are attended in large numbers and as a form of follow up, an evangelical Bible study group is formed within the larger group of the churches, a feature which was resisted in many local churches in the seventies.

Another strategy that has been recently tried out is the holiday exchange programme for young people. The excitement and fun have exposed the youth as well as their parents to the demands of the call of Christ. There is now a serious attempt to try out suggestions of the past years - the cooperation of parents, teachers, youth clubs, and the church in making the whole community a Christian one. The outreach had not been confined to the schools. Adults are particularly getting involved in many church activities that have been oriented towards evangelism. The youth, who are highly impressed and excited by this type of mission to them, have also turned to evangelize their parents. The ministry in the local church which used to be the exclusive concern of the old pastor and a few old men has tremendously changed to involve many other people - thus transforming the former dreary local church into a hilarious, challenging and refreshing community. A good number who left when they considered the worship too dull and dreary have started to return to their old churches. Retreats, night vigils, carols, etc., have been re-introduced to revitalize the old groups.

## Conclusion

Thus far the church in the local community has got to see itself no longer as a moribund and petrified institution only out there to raise funds for its own upkeep. The ability of the minister to identify and mobilize the talents with which each member is endowed is a basic step that has led to a breakthrough in reaching those outside. The concepts of 'participatory ministry' has opened room for more people to get involved in the life of the church.

There is need now, more than ever before, to emphasize the theology of the **incarnation** in all its ramifications so that the minister in a local church would certainly be able to get involved in the life of the community: He would also involve the church and the members to bring healing, peace, redemption to the community. When God took it upon himself to save man, he did not abhor getting involved with humanity.

The form of theological education today should be geared towards relevance to the practical experiences in the field.

There is need to introduce African Studies in the programme of theological institutions as well as to give missiology and evangelical theology a space in the programme.

Finally, hermeneutical problems which have plagued the church in every age would be tackled with new spiritual insight in a contextual situation. This involves a new look at a few obstacles to genuine conversion and confession of Christ in the world today. When they are properly understood, the Gospel would then be applied to tackle them in the most practical way. Although many of those obstacles may not apply in all rural communities, a few include:

- a. Religious tradition, e.g., customs, ancestor cult.
- b. Economic circumstances - economic dependency (on either extended relations, land, etc.), poverty of the people and excessive acquisitiveness, e.g., wealth.
- c. Social ties, e.g., membership of a cult, class, family, etc.
- d. Political factors, e.g., anti-church decrees, oppression, etc.
- e. Ideological factors and world-views, other value systems, etc.
- f. Types of thinking - concrete, abstract, impulsive etc.<sup>7</sup>

The Gospel, properly handled, gives a challenging and refreshing solution to problems posed by any of these and other obstacles not herein mentioned.

## Notes

1. P. A. Kalilombe, "The African Local Churches and the Worldwide Roman Catholic Communion" in **Christianity in Independent Africa**, eds. Fashole-Luke, Gray et. al. (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1978), p. 79.
2. Udobata Onunwa, "The Ministry in the Local Church," conference paper at the Nigerian Fellowship of Evangelical Students (NIFES), Benin City, April, 1981, p. 1.
3. A. C. Ezeigwe, "Challenge of Evangelization in the Nigeria of the 80's," paper presented at the Third National Congress on Evangelization, at University of Ife, Ile-Ife, p. 6.
4. See O. U. Kalu, "Protestant Christianity in Igboland" in **Christianity in West Africa: The Nigeria Story**, ed. O. U. Kalu (Ibadan: Day Star Press, 1978), p. 316.
5. B. C. Nwankiti - Presidential Address at the Synod in 1980; the Bishop himself identifies the problems in society. He also attempted some solution.
6. Extract from Presidential Address: **Ibid.**, 1980.
7. See J. S. Mbiti **Confessing Christ in Different Cultures**. (Switzerland: 1977), pp. 177-178. Cf. Udobata Onunwa, "Theological Education by Extension in Africa: Prospects and Problems. Unpub. conference paper (Aug. 1982) pp. 10-11.

# Book Reviews

## **How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth**

Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart

(Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982)

237 pages

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The first question to ask is this: What is this book? Is it a 'how to' book, is it a 'guide', or is it a bit of both? A 'how to' book gives principles and rules describing how they are used in order to do something. A 'guide' gives a list of items that are divided into different classes, with descriptions that enable one to classify and identify one of the items. The book's title and sub-title (**A guide to understanding the Bible**) indicate that it is intended to have the nature of both. This is what makes it distinctive.

The primary concern of the authors is that while the whole of the Bible is God's word and must be obeyed, yet it consists of literature of different types ('genres' is the word they prefer to use). Thus there is a 'generic' difference between the different 'genres' which is "vital and should affect both the way one reads them and how one is to understand their message for today". The point is not to isolate the different genres thereby minimising the unity of Scripture; but that, in addition to general rules of interpretation which recognise that all Scripture is the word of God, there are particular rules for each genre. In this it has more the nature of a 'guide'.

A second concern is with the 'how to' of interpretation. The major problem is that of the hermeneutical gap: the difference between the original historical context and that of today. Thus there are two tasks. The first is exegesis, to find out the original meaning. The second is hermeneutics, to hear that same meaning in today's context. It is important to note that although the word 'hermeneutics' usually refers to both tasks, our authors state that they use it in the narrower sense of the second task. The book deals with both tasks, emphasising that exegesis always comes first.

The introductory chapter dealing with the need to interpret covers a number of valuable points which set the framework for the rest of the book. There is an emphasis on the primacy of exegesis; the question all the way through is how do we do this. The answers are not addressed to the scholars, but in a very

practical way they are designed to be helpful and useful to lay people, students and busy pastors. All can do good and correct exegesis without needing to be a specialist. What is needed is careful, accurate reading and guidance as to the right questions to ask of the text. One of the greatest strengths of the book is in giving guidance as to the right questions to ask, first in general, then as regards each different genre.

Critical general questions address the occasion and purpose of each book. Nothing new here, answers are usually in the text or a good Bible dictionary or handbook. The point is they must be asked before going on to the literary questions of the point and meaning. The purpose is to discover the 'plain meaning'. This however is a deceptive term to use, if not at times downright misleading. Often there is no problem because there is general agreement amongst evangelicals as to what the 'plain meaning' is. But in a considerable number of places there is a lack of agreement and in some places there is even strong disagreement over the 'plain meaning'. How can these places have a 'plain meaning'? What is the non-expert reader to do in such places? Little advice is given here other than help in recognising that there are differences, why they exist, and to discern the good and the not-so-good. No help is given in handling the tension between the good and the good, a fairly frequent occurrence where there is disagreement.

One of the emphases is that the text must be read carefully first. This implies that one must use a good translation. What is 'good' in this context? The authors provide a helpful discussion of the differences between literal, free and dynamic equivalence translations, pointing out the weaknesses of the former two categories. They suggest that a dynamic equivalence translation is the best as a standard study Bible (they have a strong preference for the NIV), but that there is value in consulting a literal, and even a free, translation as well. This is useful advice though not all will agree with their choices. The genres that they identify for separate treatment are Epistles, O.T. narrative, Acts, Gospels, Parables, Law, Prophets, Psalms, Wisdom and Revelation. Each of these has a chapter to itself, two for the Epistles. This is where the real value of the book lies, and where its dual nature, of a 'guide' and a 'how to' book, is seen most clearly. There is a description of the nature of the genre, often other relevant background issues are dealt with, guidance is given as to the exegetical and hermeneutical tasks. The whole approach is refreshingly different and very lively. Even if one disagrees with their

conclusions, yet one will be stimulated to much creative re-thinking of scripture.

There is a useful little appendix which gives help in evaluating commentaries. What does one look for in a commentary? How can one decide which to read or buy? They also include their suggested list of best commentaries. Be warned, a number are not written from an evangelical viewpoint. The authors say this but do not indicate which these are. However, many will not be available in Africa; only about a third from the O.T. and about a half from the N.T. are currently available in Nairobi.

This book will not replace the standard books on interpretation which deal with general principles of hermeneutics in its broader sense, nor is this the authors' intent. However every Bible student would profit from its fresh approach and be stimulated to a richer understanding of Scripture. Not the least of its merits is a highly readable style and clearly marked sections which make it easy to follow.

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**Church Growth: God's Plan**  
By R.E. Harlow  
(Everyday Publications Inc., Toronto, Canada, 1980)  
80 pages, \$2.50 Cdn

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An exposition of biblical principles of growth as concerns the Church, or an analysis of strategies, or factors that promote or hinder church growth is perhaps what comes to mind. Yet **Church Growth: God's Plan** does not address these aspects. Neither does it develop theology of the Church--its purpose, identity, nature and growth. The book does not lay out a pattern for planting and nurturing churches today. Rather, it recounts **the story of the New Testament Church** in its early history. It tells the birth of the Church from the day of Pentecost, and proceeds to describe the churches founded by the apostles. Finally, the author restates Revelation in its characterization of the Church in the last days.

The publisher identifies the author's purpose as being "concerned not so much with doctrine, but rather with church practice and teaching about the church." Doctrinal problems surface in the descriptions of the various churches, as those at Colossae and Corinth. Church practice is touched upon in topics such as leadership, communion and tithing. Church life is addressed in a chapter on gifts. However, concepts as such are not developed. No issues are raised nor dealt with. The New Testament history of the Church is simply retold. What you'll find is a **summarization of Acts through Revelation.**

The book begins with a very short commentary on God's people in the Old Testament. The second chapter shifts to the New Testament by briefly considering Jesus' comments about the Church. For the most part, however, Harlow focuses on a chronological and descriptive account of the New Testament Church as told by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. The story of Paul's missionary journeys is interspersed with Paul's letters to the newly founded churches and to his co-workers. An overview of Peter's and John's letters is also given, as is a summary of the letter to the Hebrews. Harlow concludes by describing what today's church should look like in light of New Testament teaching.

The author does not take a theological approach, and thus a particular theological stance is not very evident. Yet on occasion his personal views are reflected in statements such as, "Men should uncover their heads and women should cover theirs, when they pray or prophesy". Or, "Women should not speak in church meetings." (p. 43) Harlow makes no effort to support his interpretations by looking at the biblical context. Neither does he draw on scholarly references. Interaction with the Scriptures and with other views and commentators is not the author's concern. His approach is single (personal) and literal. Even though Harlow's statements are dogmatic, he is not concerned with convincing his readers. His aim seems to be simply to present information.

In communicating much information and varied content, thoughts do not always flow very smoothly. One, or a few, central thoughts do not clearly and strongly emerge. Thus the presentation of the thesis--God's plan for church growth--is weak.

To a student of church growth, the book under review is not sufficiently challenging nor stimulating. It is neither expository, lacking scholarly depth, nor devotional, lacking personal and practical application. I would not recommend it for

pastors, teachers, nor theological students. Interested readers would be laymen at large, and new Christians in particular. Converts who are unfamiliar with the Scriptures and want an overview of the New Testament (excluding the Gospels), would profit from reading **Church Growth: God's Plan**. As already said, the book is informative in the sense that it restates a major part of the New Testament, and so reinforces biblical teaching about the Church in general. The book's style is very concise, with chapters only one to three pages in length, and very simple in structure and expression; and so it is a good study guide for the younger reader as well.

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**An African Call for Life: A Contribution to the  
World Council of Churches, Sixth Assembly**

Ed. M. MaMpolo, R. Stober, E. Vappiah  
(Uzima Press Ltd., Nairobi, 1983), pp 152, Kshs 35/-

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This book consists of a series of African ruminations on the theme of the WCC sixth assembly: 'Jesus Christ - The Life of the World'. An attempt is made to draw out the social, spiritual, economic and political ramifications of this theme.

Unfortunately, the title is a misnomer. Perhaps a more accurate one would be, 'Social and Political Life in Africa', for the main thrust is concerned with the political liberation of the Blacks rather than Christ's more radical and fundamental offer of liberation from sin.

On page 15, Simon S. Maimela writes, "God will not in the long run tolerate all those destructive social forces that continue to deny his people freedom and full life". This is surely true, but does not go far enough. God's punishment will be ultimately directed against man as sinner and rebel against His authority, only a symptom of which may be the oppression of fellow men.

What then is the ultimate authority upon which the book's ideas are based? Not the Protestant Bible. For example, Masamba MaMpolo quotes the Book of Wisdom as authoritative (p. 21). When the Bible is quoted, texts are often misapplied, (e.g. the use of

Matt 24:46 on p. 22). On page 23 we read, "It would be fair to say that the individual life is only fully lived when it is hidden in that of the community" and then texts like Luke 15:24, 32 and Col. 3:3 are illicitly adduced to substantiate this claim.

The book seems more concerned to ferment anti-foreign feeling and political unrest than to proclaim new life in Christ. In fact its message is mischievous. We are told, for example, that Kenya's government has politically failed (pp 78, 79). On page 103, Henry Okullu writes, "I am infinitely suspicious of one party system of government being capable of safeguarding and promoting human rights, because it is there to promote a colonisation of the mind and to assist its leaders in staying in power for life." Again this is evading the heart of man's plight. There are many countries with a plurality of parties whose citizens are still slaves of sin. Real freedom only comes from God through Jesus Christ.

Universalistic tendencies are found in the book. In its context, the statement, "Jesus Christ is not the life of the Church. He is the life of the world" (p. 109) clearly suggests that ultimately salvation will be enjoyed by everyone. Unfortunately this book is re-vamped Liberalism with its one-sided Social Gospel. It is a political tract thinly disguised as theology. The book's subtitle 'Jesus Christ the life of the World' is grossly misleading. It may provide some useful elementary information on Political Science (e.g. p. 101) and a salutary lesson in the excesses of modernist theology, but it is of minimal spiritual value.

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**The Idols of Death and the God of Life.** A Theology translated from the Spanish by Barbara E. Campbell and Bonnie Shepard. Contributors: Pablo Richard and nine other representatives of Latin American Liberation Theology. (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1983) 232 pages.

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Some months ago one of the leading Latin American representatives of liberation theology, the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff, came to Rome in order to defend his "liberation faith". The day after his arrival a papal decree was published by the pope, John

Paul II (Karol Wojtyla). Part of the decree is a heavy attack upon Marxism and its influence upon the Roman Catholic Church.

The message is clearly directed to the liberationist theologians who are said to turn the Christian faith upside down. The decree argues that these theologians are influenced by Marxism and they draw the poor in society into an ideological class struggle. An analysis of the society that is based upon a theology infiltrated by non-religious ideas will lead to deep contradictions, the decree states.

The ten contributors of the symposium represent various positions within a liberation theology that will be hit by the pope's criticism. Many words and deep commitment are put into these articles in order to convince the reader that a re-interpretation of God, Christ and Christian worship is a "must" if it shall be possible to arrive at a new understanding of the dignity of the human, based upon the situation of the poor and oppressed in society.

In light of Latin American history one easily understands the need for "liberation". The colonization of Latin America was assisted by a forceful "Christianization". It is a matter of fact that large groups of people have been regarded as little more than animals - if that much - compared to the European conquerers and their descendants. It is no less a fact that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America brought in a Christianity that to quite an extent ruled "the masses" by one or another form of superstition: whether this was bound to the mysterious sacrificial ministry and power of the priest, to dead people believed to be saints still alive, or to the worship of Christian symbols. "The pagans" were baptized, but they were to little extent educated. Most of the people remained in one or another form of Christopaganism.

This symposium is marked by a repenting spirit - because of past faults and because of remaining evil in society - in particular as related to the poor and oppressed. The writers give challenging descriptions of the situation of the poor and oppressed in Latin America. Political struggles are pointed out. Social, economical and ecclesiastical structures are intellectually characterized and obvious evil is highlighted. How, then, do these liberationists postulate possible solutions for a new ideal human society? what is the theological task in this situation?

A first glance at the articles gives the impression that the fundamental answers are found in the biblical writings. The Bible seems to be used in a biblicistic way: there is no end to OT and NT references. A closer look nevertheless reveals that the material used and interpreted from the OT and NT is intentionally selected for a methodology and for ideological structures of analysis that are foreign to the natural meaning of Scripture and thus also to classical Christian interpretation. At this point I agree with the pope: the theology is infiltrated by non-religious ideas. This is not to say that all articles directly represent Marxist ideology, if we by Marxist mean what Marx himself said and wrote. However, it is impossible for this reviewer to escape the impression that the selected biblical paragraphs and quotations used by the various authors have been placed into a frame of reference that keeps the door wide open for a humanistic materialistic interpretation of the text, and thus also open for the atheistic Marxist approach. This is more than an attempt to interpret the text in its own salvation-history context.

We not only sense the "crisis of faith" that has penetrated Catholic as well as Protestant theology the last years: we find this erosion of Christian faith strongly spelled out. The liberation theology we find in this book gives common seedbed for political atheistic ideology as well as for sceptical, humanistic and existentialist theologies.

It was certainly expected that Latin American liberation movements one day would begin to question the Christian integrity of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, of the pope's divine authority, of the benefit of Mary and other saints. It is to the credit of the Latin American liberation theologians that they today are seriously questioning the rich and powerful denomination in relation to the poor and oppressed.

However, the theologians we meet in this symposium have come into the danger of throwing out the baby with the water. This is stated from the obvious impression that the liberationists regard it a matter of necessity to "de-supernaturalize" the Christian revelation if it at all shall be of help for reaching a true solidarity with the poor and oppressed, if it shall help us see what is genuinely human. We do not escape a re-interpretation of "god" and "worship", as is stated again and again.

The pity is not the true concern for the poor and neglected.

Genuine Christian mission has always been occupied with helping the small and neglected--these were also often the most responsive to the Good News.

The pity of the liberation theology represented in this book is that it interprets "salvation" solely in terms of socio-political and humanistic liberation. Various Roman Catholic theologians recognized that a mystical contemplation upon the church's teaching and an inner struggle for doing good and satisfactory works before God did not lead very far in changing the condition of poor and neglected in the Latin American society. A "conversion" to "good works" in terms of socio-political liberation activity was the only option for many.

But this liberation is not radical enough. It does not take the evil at its root--it is mainly occupied with the results of evil. As Jesus said: from the heart of man comes. . . . evil thoughts, murder etc. The liberation theology in the fashion pointed out fails to deal with the lostness of the individual man. It fails to recognize God's radical liberating act in Jesus Christ who was the atonement for all the sin of the world. The dimension of forgiveness of sins by faith in Jesus Christ is completely missing in this theology. The "de-supernaturalization" has made the true God and his Son Jesus Christ to be little more than posters along a way to a new ideal genuine human society, materialistically interpreted. The Latin American liberation theology is more than we get to see from this book. Various movements exist within Latin American churches that faithfully point out God's love for all people in whatever social and political context they live. Movements that do not discriminate between groups of people on sociological and economical presuppositions. Movements that show concern without losing faith in the supernatural, without losing faith in God, that he really came to save lost man in his Son Jesus Christ.

I urge the humanistic and materialistic liberation theology to intensify its dialogue with these liberation movements in Latin America and other places. Perhaps some of them will find that the Holy Scripture is revealing the truth about God and man and not a textbook for humanistic theology, leading nowhere.

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**Theological Education by Extension - a guide for Workers in  
Developing Countries**

By Agustin & Rosario Batlle

(Uzima Press, 1983), 109 pages, Kshs 25/-

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Although the book is intended as a guide and introduction to Theological Education by Extension for workers in the developing countries, after reading the book one is not sure whether the reading heightens one's confusion about TEE or clarifies one's understanding. Part of the reason for this sort of feeling is that both Rosario and Agustin know too much and try to cover topics such as the philosophy of TEE or more specifically, theological pedagogy, Curriculum design and development, psychology of adult learners, seminar leadership and the role of a TEE facilitator, text-writing and evaluation, to name just a few of the topics touched on.

If the book is not a manual for those who do not know anything about TEE and are contemplating to start working as TEE workers, the book succeeds very well in giving one a bird's-eye view of the major areas that are covered in TEE. Indeed the writers ask more questions than they answer. The book is therefore suitable for study through discussion groups. For someone studying on his/her own, attempting to answer some of these questions can be frustrating. Words such as, 'summative' and 'formative' evaluation (p. 80) and 'dialogical method' (p. 67) could prove to be unfamiliar to Bible school students or people not acquainted with adult education. Admittedly the writers try to explain the meaning of such words but the terms themselves could have been omitted.

It is to their credit that Agustin and Rosario take principles of adult education seriously. They must be given credit too for including 'development' as an issue within the context of theological education. However Appendix C (p. 88) is more like an 'apologia' for the existence of indigenous church movements - perhaps too one sided at that. Whilst it is true that the writers intend the book to be a guide for workers of TEE in developing countries, the educational concepts that are discussed are not intrinsically Third World and, in fact, the first ten chapters are disappointingly theoretical where a few examples could have helped. Even so, students in Bible Colleges and potential TEE workers would get value for their money. TEE

tutors of the old guard will find some ideas challenging and refreshing when not all too familiar.

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**Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa**

Ed. by Brian Hearne  
(Nairobi: AACC/AMECEA, 1982)

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This book is subtitled: Final Report of the Joint Research Project of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), 1976-1981. This indicates that the contents of the book are a digest of a major research project co-sponsored by the two church groups mentioned. The scope of the project included Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The goal of the project was two-fold: 'to collect information which would be of benefit to Christians and church members in general' and 'to stimulate church members of every level to a greater understanding and co-operation' (p. 1). The ultimate purpose was stated as

to assist in the education in ecumenism of Christians in all areas of the Church's life and concern, and to convince the churches of the urgent need to commit themselves to work for Christian unity (p. 2).

The authors of this report exemplify the stated purpose. Mugambi is Anglican (CPK) and Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi. He has worked with John Mbiti with the World Council of Churches in Switzerland and has worked actively in the development of the joint religious education syllabuses in Eastern Africa and co-authored one of the 'O-level' textbooks. Mutiso-Mbinda is a Roman Catholic priest from the Machakos Diocese in Kenya and has been Director of the AMECEA Research Department since 1977. Vollbrecht is a Roman Catholic sister doing missionary work in Uganda. Previously, she taught in a girls' secondary school in Kenya. They state that

the experience of working together on this book has been itself an important ecumenical experience. . . . The mutual

respect and thinking which has characterised our working relationship has helped to bring our thinking closer together as well (p. 4).

After the joint preface by Cardinal Willebrands (President, Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Rome) and Philip Potter (General Secretary, World Council of Churches), the book is composed of eight chapters and three appendices. The contents of the book indicate a wide variety of research involvement was implemented and that much ecumenical activity is occurring throughout East Africa. The chapters will be briefly reviewed.

The first chapter discusses the historical and theological development of ecumenism in East Africa. This important chapter sets the scenario for the successes and failures of the project. After tracing the beginnings of East African ecumenism to the Kikuyu Conference of 1913, the authors then discuss the basic shortcomings of the early endeavors: 1) they were initiatives to bring about co-operation between societies, not churches; 2) African Christians were not involved in any of the proceedings; 3) Romanist missionary societies did not participate; 4) there was no unanimity/commonness of purpose among the Protestant missionary societies (the Africa Inland Mission, the Quakers, and the Seventh Day Adventists all withdrew very early from the proposed federation) (pp. 6-7). Major problems which still remain unresolved include the translation and use of the Bible, ecumenical dialogue, and ecumenism among students. From an evangelical perspective, there are some interesting observations regarding biblical theology (p. 9), theological training (p. 9), proselytizing (p. 11), and Christian student youth organizations (pp. 20-21) in this section.

Chapter two discusses a series of local study seminars focussing on ecumenism. The aim of these seminars, held in each country of the research, was 'to stimulate African scholars and teachers of theology to respond theologically to the issue of ecumenism in Eastern Africa' (p. 27). Nearly forty papers on many aspects of ecumenism were written for these seminars. While most of the papers indirectly touched on obstacles to ecumenism, only four specifically studied theological and other reasons for division. Two papers dealt with the Church's mission and ecumenism; one paper was about the Independent Churches; but there was nothing on the Bible and ecumenism (p. 29).

Three major factors which were viewed as obstacles to ecumenism were the attitudes regarding the Bible, the Church, and the

Sacraments. For example, the statement that 'Biblical fundamentalism has made ecumenical collaboration impossible the Bible is assumed to be a straight-forwardly truthful and historical narrative' excludes any real dialogue (p. 30). In fact, the rest of the paragraph rightly demonstrates one of the basic reasons for the continuation of the evangelical-ecumenical rift--the biblical doctrines of creation, sin, and salvation. Chapters three and four discuss ecumenism in rural and urban areas respectively. Both of these chapters consider ecumenical activities on a country-by-country basis. In the rural areas of Kenya, for example, the leaders acknowledged the existence of major divisions and differences between the various denominations and that these divisions were based on a variety of causes ranging from doctrine, through customs, to ignorance and prejudice. They agreed that in every place no matter what the degree of tolerance or hostility existed between the churches, they could come together for funerals. Yet even here, the report states, these occasions of co-operation often were 'a thinly-veiled opportunity to express underlying antagonisms through such means as the order in which the churches were called upon and the places their leaders were given to sit' (p. 58). After considering the results of a questionnaire, the authors draw several conclusions on rural ecumenism in Kenya:

In many cases the churches seem to be the primary community of their members; when the traditional mores of the ethnic group begin to disintegrate under the pressure of modern Kenyan life, it seems that the church community provides structures to give direction and security to its members . . . Several churches are . . . associated with one particular ethnic group . . . . The 'threat' of church unity then becomes easily identified with threats to ethnic identity. . . . [I]n some sense the church group is providing a new ethnic identity. . . . Fear is the most powerful source of division--especially fear of doing something not approved by the church leaders. . . . [C]hurch leaders hold a place of primary importance in the development of ecumenical relationships (pp. 62-63).

Tanzania's Church Unity Committee of Mbeya Region has chosen to stay on pastoral issues rather than discuss theological problems and this is seen as a positive contribution to rural ecumenical activities. This committee's concentration has been on the pastoral problem of inter-church marriages and the problem of teaching religion together in the primary schools (pp. 64-65). The negative aspects mentioned by the authors include:

- 1) Not all the churches of Mbeya Region belong to the committee;
- 2) The heads of some of the churches do not communicate with their pastors on ecumenical matters;
- 3) There is still little co-operation between pastors;
- 4) The committee reaches mostly the pastors; ordinary Christians know little about ecumenism or the reasons for other churches' practices;
- 5) The major Christian councils of Tanzania do not show any interest in this committee's work in Mbeya (pp. 65-66).

This rural research was planned not only to provide data on the current state of ecumenism, but also to foster its growth and development. It was only partially successful, but the authors claim that 'its success where it was implemented means that it offers a useful model for ecumenical progress anywhere' (p. 78). The authors honestly state that the research itself may have a negative effect of enhancing the barriers of fear which already separate. Also, they suggest the limitation that men and women with little formal education might not be able to evaluate the serious differences between the churches. One implication from the study is the need for education in ecumenism at all levels of church hierarchy, beginning at the top in order to convince the total membership of its importance. One inference is 'that many pay lip-service to the concept, but steer clear of concrete involvement with other churches' (pp. 78-79). Another implication is the need for centralized policies supporting ecumenism. Much of the blame for division is placed on the church leaders with the suggestion that they must initiate the move toward unity.

Regarding the chapter on ecumenism in the cities, one conclusion of the research was the willingness of the vast majority of the people to embrace ecumenism. The second conclusion was that the church leaders should initiate ecumenical sharing (p. 93). The report also indicated that good relationships existed with Muslims (pp. 85-102) and African Traditional Religionists (p. 141).

Chapter five studies the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This week of prayer, begun in 1908, was changed to prayer for unity in 1935 and continues up until 1982 (the year of the

publication of this book). The planning for the week of prayer appears to be haphazard and inconsistent due to the lack of effective communication within and between the churches. Much is left to the priest's/pastor's memory with no reminders from higher offices. Though this activity has a long history, the authors suggest that it would be difficult to find enthusiasm for it, except in isolated places. One insight observed was that

theology (in the narrow sense of doctrine and church teachings) is far from being the *only* factor in creating divisions among Christians--cultural and social elements can be far more divisive (p. 107).

The sixth chapter, on Christian religious education in the schools (CRE), suggests that this has been the area of greatest ecumenical effort, particularly at the secondary school level. The major example given is the joint efforts of Roman Catholic and Protestant standardized syllabi in Kenya, both for 'O-level' and 'A-level.' Before 1970, the syllabus was Bible-centered, but during the 1970's new syllabi were developed in accordance with national objectives and priorities. Its objective was to make CRE more relevant to the lives of the students in post-colonial East Africa. The new syllabi incorporated studies in the African cultural and religious heritage, trying to make the Christian faith more relevant to it (p. 113). This resulted in the concerns that 1) for the first time, the African cultural and religious heritage was appreciated and taken seriously in CRE, and 2) the Bible is still taken seriously, but it is no longer considered to be the only ingredient of full CRE (p. 124). With the educational system becoming increasingly secularized, ecumenical development in a Bible-centered CRE may need to be encouraged. The report indicates that the pastoral interest from the churches can be the most helpful factor in enhancing the CRE studies, since many of the professionally-qualified teachers are reluctant (or even hostile) about their own involvement. This reviewer's opinion is that this particular chapter presents the most positive ecumenical activity which has occurred in East Africa. Yet the danger is 'that joint religious education initiatives may lead to the reduction of doctrine to "the lowest common denominator", to a point where there is no disagreement' (p. 168).

The last two chapters deal with attitudes towards Christian unity and concluding reflections. Attitudes cover the whole spectrum from open hostility through indifference to positive recommendations. The report encourages inter-church dialogue (p.

162) and suggests that practical issues of inter-faith activities could lead to more ecumenism, especially if both the leadership and membership of the churches are re-educated into ecumenism.

The authors state that in spite of the extensive research done, in many ways the goals of the research were not met. Several factors contributed to this: lack of response to questionnaires, incomplete information, difficulties of communication and traveling, etc. More important factors were lack of interest (especially among church leaders), mutual misunderstandings, and disjunctive organization and communication systems within and between the churches. However, the authors state that the greatest problem/barrier has been

the inheritance of what is at worst prejudice and mistrust, and at best, a lack of interest, among the various churches. The deepest of these is the division between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic traditions. . . . [I]t appears that very little indeed is being done to bridge this gulf on the theological level, despite developments in world ecumenism, and despite a growing number of common development projects involving the two traditions in the area of our research (p. 3).

This reviewer was disappointed by the stance taken by the report. First, the report uncritically promotes organizational, if not organic, unity of all the churches without demonstrating any biblical support for it. Apparently, to the authors, organizational unity is the *summum bonum* (highest good). The authors seem to delight in caricaturing evangelicals as peripheral elements inhibiting the cause and progress of ecumenism (pp. 10, 21, 30, 31, 50, 85, et al). They also seem to be blissfully ignorant of activities of inter-church fellowship and meetings among evangelicals, not only in East Africa, but continent-wide. This reviewer refers to groups such as the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM), the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), the evangelical fellowships in each country, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK), various associations of geographically-organized fellowships of evangelical Bible Schools, etc. These evangelical activities in unity have been occurring for some years, even decades, without the need to attempt organizational fusion. The report mentions 'that a large number of Christians in Africa belong to the Evangelical wing' (p. 31), yet the authors mention these church groups basically as withdrawing from or opposing the liberal/conciliar WCC-Roman

Catholic enterprises, e.g., the Assemblies of God, the Baptists, the Africa Inland Church (pp. 87-98).

The book is a strong polemic for the demonstration of joint Anglican-Roman Catholic activities as most of the sections deal with these two bodies. However, there are fair sections indicating that many other groups have been involved with these two main groups. It seems to this reviewer that the authors recognize the WCC (with its AACC) as the only voice for non-Roman Catholics (p. 148). As the writers mentioned 'theological blinkers' (p. 139), it would have been of great service to the book's value and to their own interests if they had removed theirs.

According to our evangelical view, there is only one basis upon which genuine unity can be founded--the Person and Work of Jesus as revealed in the inerrant, authoritative Word of God. Far from attempting to form a visible, organizational union, genuine biblical unity already exists among all those who are God's children through faith in Christ (Eph. 4:3-7; Gal. 3:26). Dare we call it an 'evangelical ecumenism'?

The value of **Ecumenical Initiatives in Eastern Africa** for the evangelical lies in its displaying the many attempts to develop unity and the variety of means which have been taken by some church groups to achieve it. We can learn many lessons from it for application in our own ministries in our endeavor to uphold and practice biblical truth. But we also need to be watchful that we not surrender our evangelical commitment to bringing people to Christ and helping them grow in Christ.

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