

Theological Education for a Mature African Church

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by

Prof. Danny McCain

Education is transferring knowledge, attitudes and wisdom from one person to another person. Theological education is transferring religious or spiritual knowledge, attitudes and wisdom to another person. The task of theological educational institutions is to transfer the collective knowledge of God and the things related to God from one generation to the next.

Theological education has been taking place ever since the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve obviously passed on to their children and subsequent generations their knowledge about God. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and their descendants primarily transferred their understanding of God orally. However, starting with Moses, this information became written down and from that point theological education began to include written documents.

Jesus' model of theological education was simply the traditional mentoring type of education. Jesus invited 12 of his students to live with him for three years. They went everywhere he went and absorbed his knowledge and wisdom simply from being around him. The disciples used a similar strategy for passing on the theological truths that they had learned from Jesus. Barnabas learned from Peter and the other disciples. Barnabas was then able to teach some things to Paul who worked with him. Later, Paul invited Silas, Timothy and Luke to follow him and learn from him. Paul and Peter and James and other New Testament leaders also used the method they had learned from Moses. They wrote down the things that they had learned from Jesus and the things that they had learned from one another. Thus the theological truths of the New Testament era were preserved in a written form.

In Ephesus, we see an attempt at a more formal type of theological education. Paul was forced to leave the synagogue in Ephesus, *"so Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus"* (Acts 19:9b). The Western text of Acts says Paul met in this school from 11:00 AM to 4:00 every afternoon, when the school would have normally taken an afternoon siesta.¹ Paul apparently used this time to teach the new converts and prepare them to continue spreading the gospel and leading new believers. This was an amazingly successful school because within two years *"all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord"* (19:10).

Theological education has continued all throughout church history. We are Christians today after the pattern of the early church because our spiritual fathers successfully passed theological and spiritual truths to the subsequent generations who passed them on to us.

Theological education is now common in Africa. There are over 550 theological institutions in Nigeria alone.² When missionaries came to Africa in the 19th century, once they had made converts, they started schools to prepare the next generation of Christians for the tasks before them. When the missionaries left Africa, the replacement church leaders also felt strongly that there must be theological education in order for the church to be strong.

The African Church in Transition

The African church is experiencing transition in at least two ways. First, the African church is breaking free more and more from the bodies and cultures that created it. For example, the Anglican Church no longer bows down and accepts everything that comes from Canterbury. The Anglican Communion in Africa is standing on its own and, in fact, leading those portions of the Anglican Communion that are wanting to maintain a commitment to traditional orthodoxy, even in the face of opposition from the western branches of the church.

Second, the church in Africa is in a transition from being a young church to being a mature church. John addresses his first epistle to three different kinds of believers:

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven . . . I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children . . . I write to you, fathers . . . I write to you, young men . . . (1 John 2:12-14).

Paul mentions here three categories of Christian believers: children, young men and fathers. Although one cannot be absolutely sure John is deliberately referring to three stages of the Christian life, this is indeed the normal progression in life and it also appears to be the normal progression in our spiritual life.³

I believe churches pass through similar stages. When they are first planted they are infant churches and, like infants, are dependent upon those who started them. These are first-generation churches. All of the churches Paul wrote to were first generation churches, having been planted only one to fifteen years earlier. Normally, as churches develop, they become stronger, more independent and productive. Second generation churches are stronger than first generation churches because their leaders and members have had the advantage of being reared in the Christian faith. Eventually churches reach a stage of development that they can be said to be mature churches, no longer dependent upon the parent bodies but having a warm and healthy relationship with them. These would be the third or fourth generation churches.

The modern church in Africa is basically a third or fourth generation church.⁴ The first of the organizations that eventually made up TEKAN churches started working in Nigeria in 1904. However, it was not until the 1930's that there was significant growth.⁵ These facts suggest that African Christianity is well beyond its infancy. In fact, it has been a "young" church for some time and is now entering the stage where it can be said to be a mature church—a "father" church. This is not to imply that the African church has "arrived" or "peaked" or even reached an ideal stage of development any more than a young married father has "arrived" or achieved his ultimate success in life. However, it does mean that there is a level of stability and completeness that characterizes the church and, like a young father, it is even strong enough to help the Christian bodies that originally gave birth to it.

A New Phase of Theological Education

Education must always be targeted. We do not teach a child in primary school like we teach a university student or *vice versa*. Each school and, in fact, each lecture must be targeted toward the persons who are going to receive that education. Since this is true, all theological education must also be targeted. What does that suggest for the next generation of theological education in Africa and particularly, in Nigeria?

The first theological education in Africa was designed to teach the basic elements of the faith to new believers—teaching them what it meant to be true Christians.⁶ The next generation of theological education was designed to prepare new Christians for expansion. This phase of instruction included a heavy emphasis on evangelism and church growth and particularly trained evangelists. This period of theological education has also been successful. The story of the growth of the church in Africa has been phenomenal, perhaps the most successful church growth story in the history of Christianity.

These kinds of theological education continue but the dominant form of theological education has changed its focus again and is primarily designed for the training of leaders who will minister to the church itself, particularly pastors and teachers. These changing emphases have been gradual and perhaps hardly noticed as our theological institutions have naturally adapted to meet the changing needs of the church.

I believe the church in Africa has entered or is entering a new phase of theological education. It will obviously continue with its teaching of the basic truths of Christianity and will also continue with its stress on church growth, exegetical and theological skills and pastoral and ecclesiastical leadership. However, the church in Africa has another significant task now. Not only must it make sure that the individual members of the church are genuine followers of Jesus but it is now time for the church to start exercising more positive and wholesome influence on the culture itself. In short, it is now the task of the African Church to Christianize its culture. It is time to accelerate the change from a worldview that is part Christian, part western, and part traditional African culture to a Christian world view that is Biblical, comprehensive, holistic and African. In other words, it is time for the Christian leaders to target not just those members in their churches and those people they wish to become members but target the whole community in which they live to attempt to exert wholesome Christian influence over it and give it positive direction.

During his ministry, Jesus engaged the whole community, including Jews and Gentiles, men and women, adults and children, sympathizers and non-sympathizers. He became involved in many activities that go beyond what would traditionally be thought of as religious. Jesus raised the dead (John 11:43-44); he fed the hungry (Matthew 14:15-21); he counseled the confused (John 3:1-21; 4:7-30); he assisted with income generation (John 21:1-6; 11); he helped pay taxes (Matthew 17:27); he relieved the embarrassment of the disgraced (John 2:1-10); he defended the abused (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-17); he assisted the homeless (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20); he became friends with the rejected (Matthew 9:10-13; 11:19); and he even spent time with children (Matthew 19:13-15).

Jesus' example suggests that as the church matures and becomes more established in the society, the Christian leader must assume a greater role than just overseeing the religious affairs of the church. And if this is true, then theological education must be adapted to make sure that the church is fulfilling those responsibilities. No theological institution in Africa would want to go back only to that first generation kind of theological education—of teaching only the basic elements of Christianity. Neither should we be satisfied to limit ourselves to the second generation type of theological education—preparing evangelists or even the third generation—preparing pastors and church leaders.⁷ Theological education has and continues to fulfill those responsibilities. It has brought the church to the point it is quite successful but there is a new task ahead of us now—the Christianizing of our culture and we must adapt our theological education to meet that important need.

Changing Focus of Theological Education

Where does theological education in Africa go from here? What must we do with theological education during this next generation that we have not done in the past? Fortunately, anticipating the issues that I raise in this paper, many seminaries and other theological institutions are already making a number of changes in their curriculum and methodology. I will now outline some of those essential changes that need to be made or accelerated in our theological institutions to meet the needs of a mature African church.

Theological education must develop a more holistic view of Christian leadership.

The African Church has successfully developed a wholesome and holistic view of ministry that I believe is healthy and Biblical. Fortunately, the church does not restrict its view of ministry only to religious things. The African church is involved in many social and community responsibilities. I do not have much to add to that. However, I believe what we must work to clarify and develop is a more holistic view of Christian leadership.

The current view of Christian leadership was formulated in a time when the church was trying to grow and to establish itself as the most important part of every individual Christian's life. Therefore, we have preached to our people; we have counseled them; we have provided support to them in times of trouble and have even been there to help them celebrate. During the next phases of our theological education we must develop leaders that will not only continue those things but help transform the society itself.

I believe the modern African view of Christian leadership was formulated by people who had a secular orientation. African societies have never separated their religion from their society at large. Rather their religious responsibilities, celebrations and taboos were as much part of their lives as their work, their family, the chieftaincy or any other part of society. However, the missionaries that planted the church in Africa were largely from the West and had been influenced by secularism which separates society into the religious and non-religious realms. The missionaries passed onto the first African Christian leaders a philosophy of life and a philosophy leadership that were also influenced by secularism. For example, this worldview either ignored political governance or conceded it to others. Politics was considered a cesspool of sinful activity and Christians should not get mixed up in it.

In addition, the early missionaries inadvertently promoted a secular hierarchy of leadership. When they got intelligent and promising converts, they trained them for "Christian" leadership which involved some aspect of church work. The early missionary schools were designed to teach people to read the Bible and prepare young people for teaching and other Christian ministries not for "secular" leadership. It is my guess that few missionaries ever realized how incredibly successful they were being and that some of their students would someday be the rulers of their respective communities, states, provinces and even countries. From their point of view, the best that they could do was to train a generation of Christians to be honorable and successful leaders of the church.

Was that enough? Have we fulfilled our responsibility to the church and the community when we have trained our graduates to be good pastors and good Bible teachers and good Bible translators and good evangelists and missionaries? The church in Africa has done that quite well. However, I do not believe that is all that God is calling the church to do. Our next

generation of Christian leaders must be genuine community leaders who are not just concerned about the church but reflect God's concern for the community at large.

In the past if one of our pastors strayed into politics, we often commiserated with one another over the downfall of this brother. We admitted to ourselves that somehow we had failed and we talked in quiet terms about how this person had yielded to the temptation of the world and stooped to go into politics. However, is that really a wholesome Christian attitude?

- Should we not be training our students to be community leaders?
- Should not our pastors be concerned about all the issues that affect their people, including politics, business, entertainment, education and every other part of society?
- Should not our pastors and Christian leaders be interested in making sure that Jesus is Lord over the culture and community as well as individuals?

Sometimes our Christian leaders are indeed viewed as community leaders. They do get involved in things that affect the community as a whole. Unfortunately, that is often accidental and almost viewed as exceptional. However, with the maturing of the African church, our seminaries and other theological institutions must prepare our students to be community leaders intentionally. Thus, our theological institutions must develop and teach a more complete and Biblical understanding of all the diverse parts of society.

The US Civil Rights movement is a good model of wholesome and aggressive community engagement. Nearly all of the African American civil rights leaders in the 1950's and 1960's were religious leaders. However, they were also community leaders. Martin Luther King, Jr, Ralph David Abernathy, and Andrew Young were probably the three most well-known leaders of the civil rights movement. They were all trained ministers. They understood that the injustices of the American society at that time were negatively affecting their churches and society as a whole, even the white community. They fasted and prayed and preached and conducted Bible studies and sang about these social injustices but they did more than that. They organized themselves and actively opposed the injustices in the society.

- They taught their people about the US Constitution and civic responsibility.
- They registered people to vote.
- They boycotted businesses that discriminated on the basis of race.
- They brought litigation against municipalities that retained unconstitutional laws.

And these pastors were enormously successful. In fact, they were so successful that today, an African American is the president of the United States of America. I can assure you without any fear of contradiction that that would have never happened without these African black preachers who understand that they had a responsibility not just to the people within the four walls of their church but a responsibility to the society at large.

I am not advocating for a Christian state. I think the Middle Ages and even the post-reformation period in Europe demonstrate that mixing up church and state affairs too much creates many kinds of problems. I also recognize that the New Testament itself acknowledges political leaders that are non-Christians and demands that we have proper respect for them. However, I am advocating that we must be salt and light in the culture (Matthew 5:13-14). The great Baptist pastor, Vance Havner, said, "Salt never did any good in a salt shaker." Our Christian leaders must move beyond the four walls of our church buildings and make a deliberate effort to positively impact our communities. Non-Christians have nothing to fear

from a Christian-dominated and Christian-influenced culture because true Christianity will build and strengthen a culture that is honest, transparent, prosperous, just and fair to all.

If what I have advocated is correct, how will this affect our church and theological education in the future? I believe we must have a greater focus on the wholesome influence Christianity can have on society. We must take the strengths of our faith and make sure the society is positively influenced by them. What are some of these Christian convictions?

- We must have a greater focus on honesty and integrity. This will address the issue of corruption in society.
- We must have a greater focus on sexual purity. This will address the issue of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV and AIDS.
- We must have a greater focus on business and economic principles. This will address the issues of poverty and unemployment.
- We must have a greater focus on living in a pluralistic society. This will address the issue of ethnic competition and violence.
- We must have a greater focus on governance. This will address the issue of expenditures for public projects and the overall direction of society.

Our seminaries in the future must be proactive in responding to these things.

- Seminaries must include more courses on governance and law.
- Seminaries must include more courses on business and economics.
- Seminaries must include more courses on social and community issues.

If we develop a more holistic view of Christian leadership, we will need to develop a more comprehensive form of theological education. Therefore, all theological institutions must examine their academic curricula and extra-curricula activities to make sure that they are preparing their students to be holistic Christian leaders for a mature African church.

Theological education must develop a greater spirit of cooperation and unity

Globalization has become a common word in the international community. Because of advances in transportation and communication, the world is “shrinking” and the individual cultures are interacting with and being affected by one another more. Globalization increases the influence one part of the world has on the other part of the world. Whenever there is a plane crash in any part of the world, other parts of the world know about it in a few minutes. However, globalism goes far beyond just news about the other parts of the world. As we have seen in the last several months, the economy of one country is inseparably tied to that of other nations. Therefore, there is a greater emphasis in the international community to understand the cultures and economies and religions of the other part of the world.⁸ There is only one earth and all people must share that earth. Therefore, the wise leaders in one nation or one part of the world are going to try to understand and develop more wholesome relationships with other parts of the world.

Interestingly, Christianity is experiencing its own form of globalization. Due to many of the same issues such as improved communication and transportation, it is much easier for one part of the church to interact with and influence Christianity in another part of the world.

What should be the practical result of this growing knowledge of and interaction with and interdependence upon each other? I think we should take advantage of this phenomenon to improve one of the major concerns Jesus had during his last night on this earth. He prayed that his disciples would be “*one as we are one*” (John 17:11). Unfortunately, this part of Jesus’ prayer has not been answered very well. The church throughout history has often been divided by doctrine, practice, tradition, language, class and race.

In light of the growing emphasis on globalization—one part being affected by all, is this not a good time to help finally answer Jesus’ prayer for unity? Is it not time to get beyond the fears and petty jealousies that sometimes characterize the church and take a more selfless look at our ministry? Would a greater focus on unity not describe the maturing of the church?

The creation of *Tarayya Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Sudan* (TEKAS),⁹ later modified to *Tarayya Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeria* (TEKAN), was an excellent example of Christian unity. The founders of TEKAN were willing to set aside their minor differences and work together for the common good. Has TEKAN weakened any of the original churches? I think not. In fact, the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN) is a product of that cooperation. The question is this: Is it time to go beyond that? It is time for the evangelical churches to come together in some greater application of unity and cooperation?

TCNN has led the way in helping to encourage unity in theological education.

- TCNN has opened up its journal, *TCNN Research Bulletin*, for all theological scholars in the area to contribute.
- TCNN hosted Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS) in its early days and thus encouraged the production and distribution of textbooks for other Nigerian schools.
- TCNN has hosted the Jos-Bukuru Theological Society for many years, a forum that has given scholars and academics from all theological institutions an opportunity to share their research and experiences together.
- TCNN has recently hosted the annual conference of the National Association of Biblical Studies (NABIS).

All of these are positive steps in the right direction. However, I believe that in light of the globalization of the world and Jesus’ prayer for unity, it is time for our seminaries to consider additional ways that we can help one another go beyond what we have done in the past. Would it not help answer Jesus’ prayer for unity among his followers if our local seminaries were willing to share resource persons? Would it not be useful for someone from one seminary who really understands some technical aspect of theology to give lectures in several different sister institutions without jealousy or fear of loss?

And, if we really wanted to get creative, could we not do other things?

- Is it time for us to consider doing joint promotion exercises with fellow seminaries to insure uniformity and professionalism in our staff?
- Is it time for us to consider doing occasional joint convocation exercises and other celebrations together?
- Is it time for us to create a mechanism whereby students could take “for credit” courses at other seminaries?
- Is it time to create a strong coalition or consortium of evangelical seminaries that will serve the educational community as the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association

(NEMA) has served the missions community? Perhaps we could call it the Nigeria Evangelical Theological Education Association (NETEA).

I am going to add one additional thought here—a stress on one area of cooperation that I think that our theological educational institutions should especially consider.

Pentecostalism is a branch of evangelicalism that has come to Nigeria to stay. Although it has been part of Nigerian Christianity in some sense of the word for at least 80 years,¹⁰ it received a fresh infusion in the early 70's and has continued to exercise a growing influence ever since. Because Pentecostal churches have primarily grown at the expense of evangelical and mainline churches, there has been much resentment toward Pentecostalism and often a spirit of competition from non-Pentecostal churches. These have been fueled by doctrinal differences and practices that can be quite significant.

However, the objective observer would have to admit that, in many ways, Pentecostalism has been good for the church in Africa.

- It has infused enthusiasm into the church.
- It has helped to recapture the attention of the younger generation.
- It has enabled Africans to worship in a more authentically African manner.
- It has helped to bring an appreciation of the supernatural back to the African church.
- It has taken up the challenge of missions and is filling in many of the gaps that the more mainstream evangelical churches have not been able to fill.

However, Pentecostalism has had its weaknesses. There has often been more stress on ecstatic utterances than exegesis and more emphasis on good feelings than good theology. Unfortunately, advanced theological education has lagged behind in Pentecostal circles. Fortunately, that is changing. Pentecostals are eager to catch up. They are ready to learn the theological sciences from those who have practiced them for many years. Therefore, I believe it is time for mainstream evangelical Christianity to open wide its theological education doors to Pentecostal students and assist Pentecostals in other ways:

- We should not just tolerate them. We should embrace them.
- We should make every effort to prepare them to serve their own constituents.
- We should force them to think but not assume that any “intelligent” student will embrace the host’s views of the baptism of the Holy Spirit or other doctrines.
- We should allow and encourage our lecturers to teach and supervise in their seminaries and Bible colleges.

Let us work hard to make sure that the mature African church answers Jesus’ prayer for unity among his followers.

Theological education must develop a greater emphasis on excellence and professionalism.

Africa has made good progress in developing her theological institutions in a very utilitarian manner. We have stretched our theological education funds as far as possible. We have been able to do more on less money. That is commendable and Biblical. However, in learning to “get by” we have sometimes excused sloppiness and carelessness in ourselves and our institutions. Because we have not had enough funding to do all that needed to be done, we

have sometimes allowed our standards to slip and this has at times encouraged a rather unprofessional look and feel about our theological education.

This is not a call for us to spend money lavishly or irresponsibly. However, I believe that our seminary campuses should be centres of excellence, efficiency and aesthetics. They should be the most attractive facilities in the community. We must pay more attention to what the visual image of our campuses are saying about our Christianity. And we must take reasonable steps to address this need.

- We must plant more flowers.
 - We must paint our aging buildings.
 - We must teach our people to maintain things better.
 - We must create an atmosphere of reverence and beauty on campus.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians and gave two verses that should characterize our theological education:

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

All of our seminaries and Bible colleges are Christian organizations. We must remember that all that we do in the name of theological education has the name of Jesus on it. And all that we do is a public testimony about our attitude toward Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:23 was written specifically to slaves. If slaves were to work with all their hearts for their earthly masters, how much more should we who are servants of God work with all of our hearts in training the next generation of leaders that will represent Jesus?

Our institutions must make a deliberate effort to refocus our attention on ways that we can reflect the excellence of God.

- We must keep time better than everyone else and, in so doing, teach our people the importance of time.
- We must encourage our staff to always be well prepared—prepared for every lecture and every chapel sermon and every public or private presentation.
- We must encourage our people to dress well—dress professionally and look like we are leaders and not be too casual about God’s work.
- We must work on our English grammar and make sure we speak and write properly.
- We must make sure that we understand plagiarism and copyright laws and not excuse ourselves of unprofessional and unethical behavior because “we are in Africa.”

We must raise our standards to the point that we are upholding the highest standards possible. In fact, our standards should be so high that the universities and other tertiary institutions should be coming to study us and understand how we can do things so well. God is a God of excellence. May that excellence be reflected in our theological education!

Theological education must address the specific issues of a mature church

As was demonstrated earlier, the church in Nigeria has reached or is reaching a mature status as a church. Therefore, the issues in the church today are different than they were 50 years ago when the church was much younger and less developed. What are the issues of a third and fourth generation church? There are three specific “mature” issues that I believe the African church must address today.¹¹ And if the church is going to address them, then the theological institutions must address them as well.

Governance

It may be impossible to explain all the reasons why the early missionaries did what they did and did not do certain things. One thing is certainly true. Most missionaries did not prepare their converts very well for governance. Perhaps because of the colonial government under whom they worked, the missionaries never anticipated any kind of self-rule by their converts. Perhaps they did not want their people spoiled from too many influences from outside¹² such as politics or perhaps there were other reasons why the missionaries ignored this important part of life. However, the whole area of civil service and governance was largely overlooked by the early missionaries. This carried over to the early Christian leaders who also tended to overlook these areas. However, the ongoing march of political and social development across Africa did not overlook these issues and, starting in the 1950’s, Africans began occupying senior political and governmental offices. There have been some outstanding exceptions but, as a general rule, many African “Christian” political leaders have not performed well. Is it because Africans were incapable of governing as some racist observers have maintained? That is obviously not true? Is it because the colonial government left them with nothing to govern as some African nationalists insist? This does not appear to be the truth either. However, it does seem indisputable that the colonial government and perhaps to a lesser extent, the missionary community did not provide the future rulers of Africa with good preparation for civil and governmental leadership.

We in African can continue to complain about this oversight (or deliberate policy) but the responsibility for governance is now squarely in the hands of Africans. And because the church is such a significant force in the society, I believe the church must take up the responsibility to prepare its members for civil service and governance.

There have been some efforts by the church to address the issue of governance. The Africa Forum on Religion and Governance (AFREG) has cooperated with the national office of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in preparing a one-page document known as the Nigeria Christian Creed on Governance.¹³ Four Bible studies have also been prepared to help the church teach this document. CAN has sponsored training workshops in how to use this material for pastors in several of Nigeria’s states. These documents and training are a significant step in the right direction. However, since the thought leaders of the church often are found in our theological institutions, should not our seminaries and religion departments be the primary ones to address the issue of Christians in governance?

In reviewing 13 copies of the *TCNN Review Bulletin*, representing 43 articles, I have found only 2 articles related to this topic.¹⁴ I think that we can and must do better than that.

Are we fulfilling our responsibilities as custodians of the collective wisdom and knowledge of the church if we ignore issues of governance? I think not. I believe that a course or seminar should be prepared so that every seminary graduate has a good understanding of the Christian’s responsibility in governance. In addition, our African theological conferences

should commission papers to be presented on this issue and our journals should encourage submissions related to Christianity and governance.

Responding to Violence

Perhaps the biggest point of tension in Africa is the tension over religion. Most of Northern Africa follows Islam whereas most of Sub-Saharan Africa follows Christianity. Where these two meet, there is often tension. Nigeria is the place in Africa where this tension has often boiled over into violence. And because Jos is the point in Nigeria where the Muslim South meets the Christian South, Jos has become a real point of tension and violence. When religious tension is mixed with traditional ethnic quarrels and political disputes, this makes fertile soil for burning and killing and destruction.

Unfortunately, the church has not always responded to this violence in a Biblical way or even in a consistent manner. When there is no teaching and training about any specific problem, people will tend to respond to that problem the way that their traditional world view taught them. This means that Christians have often responded to violence with violence, which is contrary to the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 5:38-39; 43-47; Romans 12:20).

Martin Luther King, Jr. who has already been referred to in this paper, has something to teach us about this problem as well. As an African American, he clearly saw the injustices of the various branches of the US government. However, as a Christian pastor, he also understood Jesus' teachings about violence. Therefore, he encouraged and trained his followers to practice non-violent civil disobedience. For example, he would encourage them to deliberately break one of the segregationist laws, knowing that they would be arrested and probably beaten by the local white policemen. Thus, he trained them how to respond. He staged mock violence and mock arrests and required the participants in his programmes to go through these role-playing exercises. He understood that if someone hits you, the natural reaction is to hit back. However, he also understood that to hit back was contrary to the teachings of Jesus and would also be counterproductive in that particular environment.

King and his non-violent approach to social upheavals have something to teach us in Africa. Our theologians and our senior church leaders must seriously examine the teachings of the New Testament and create a consensus about how they apply to the church in Africa and Nigeria at this particular time in history. And our seminaries and Bible colleges must create courses and seminars and practical training that will prepare our next generation of Christian leaders in the best way to respond to violence and aggression. If we do not do this, our graduates who become our future church leaders will to continue to respond to violence the way their traditional world view has taught them.

Environmental Issues

Africa is blessed by God with a wonderful climate, an abundance of natural resources and a beautiful environment. God has made Africa beautiful. Unfortunately, we humans have made Africa ugly.

- We have polluted the lakes and rivers.
- We have littered our roads and communities with refuse.
- We have made our air unhealthy with our environmental practices.
- We have wasted our natural resources including our beautiful African animals.

In the early days, when the church was simply struggling to establish a toehold on the continent and when traditional practices did not contribute so much to this kind of pollution, the church was largely silent about environmental issues. That was probably excusable. However, the church can no longer afford to be silent about these things. The mature church must address the Christian responsibility to the environment.

The Bible teaches us that everything was created by God (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1) and thus belongs to God (Exodus 19:5b; Psalm 24:1; 50:10). The Bible further implies that all of us share the resources of the world and we must make every effort to share them equitably. The *Nigeria Covenant* says this:

We believe that public assets including church property and the environment are a trust given to us to be used for the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. Therefore, we pledge not to exploit, abuse, steal, misuse or mismanage any of these public assets.¹⁵

Does not a mature view of Christian theology recognize that because the earth belongs to God we must treat it with dignity and respect and use its resources efficiently and conscientiously? Is it not time for our theologians and theological institutions to place the care of God's earth near the top of our priority list? The care of God's universe, which is the home to all humanity, surely deserves major attention and perhaps a separate course in our theological institutions as well as special focus in our conferences and journals.

Theological education must use a greater variety of educational tools

It is not only the curriculum that must be adjusted to meet the needs of the adult church in Africa. The structure of our theological education must continue to develop to meet the needs of the twenty-first century church. What will some of those adjustments look like?

Modular Education

One technique some African seminaries are using is modular education. Instead of students taking six or eight courses simultaneously, they take them one at a time. Instead of lecturers teaching three or four courses at a time, they teach only one intensive course several hours a day for several days in a row. This approach to education has several advantages:

- It enables the student and staff to concentrate on one topic at a time.
- It enables the seminary to engage outside visiting lecturers and specialists whom the seminary could not otherwise employ.
- It exposes the students to more people, thus providing a more well-rounded education.
- It makes part-time and in-service education much more possible.
- It avoids providing housing and other long-term benefits for these visiting lecturers.

Obviously, there are some courses, like language courses, where it is difficult if not impossible to conduct a modular type education. However, sponsoring short intensive courses is a model of education that many seminaries are using successfully at the present time. Even if an institution does not choose to adopt a full modular timetable, it should be flexible enough to sponsor specialized modular courses from time to time.

In-Service Education

In 1994, International Institute for Christian Studies conducted a feasibility study to determine how the organization could best assist the teaching of Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) in the public schools in Nigeria. The overwhelming answer was the need for in-service training. Many teachers had been teaching 15 or 20 years without upgrading their education. This study led to the creation of a four-week in-service training programme known as the Professional Certificate in Christian Education (PCCE). I believe a similar study among churches and pastors would demonstrate a similar need among church leaders.

The primary focus of our theological institutions is on training new pastors and church leaders. However, should we also not be concerned about those pastors and other church leaders who have been in the field for many years without updating their theological education? Denominations or the departments of education within various denominations have often organized such training. However, is it not time for theological institutions to think about in-service education as a regular and normal part of their ministry?

- In-service education keeps practitioners current in their disciplines.
- In-service education keeps practitioners in touch with colleagues in other institutions.
- In-service education provides opportunities to practitioners to bounce their questions and frustrations off of experienced people.
- In-service education helps resource persons to receive real-live feedback from the field which enables them to enrich their regular classes.

Let us not ignore the thousands of church leaders who are out in the field, crying for our help.

Second-Career Education

One of the phenomena that the modern world is experiencing is that people are living longer and healthier which means they have more years of profitable service. Therefore, many are spending their retirement years in Christian ministry. Some are even taking an early retirement or even changing careers in mid-life in order to go into Christian ministry.

This suggests that in the future our seminaries are going to have older students and many of those students will have had vast personal experience. Thus, our seminaries must anticipate and prepare for this accordingly. We need to develop special tracks whereby we can exempt certain courses for mature students. We also need prepare special courses for them that are tailored to their needs and problems and career goals. We need to also figure out ways to take advantage of their expertise and experience while on campus to challenge and address the needs of the rest of the student body.

Information Technology Education

For many reasons, Africa was slow in entering the technological age. However, Africa is catching up fast. Our universities and other tertiary institutions have made a great effort in preparing her students to be computer literate.

Our seminaries must not lag behind in this area.

- We must make sure that all students have a basic working knowledge of computers.
- We must insist that our lecturers learn how to use computers, the Internet and other electronic educational and communication devices.

- We must make sure that our libraries have electronic resources and that our library staff are well trained and keep current in IT research.
- We must make sure that our academic and financial records have access to appropriate electronic hardware and software to do their jobs.

In addition to using technology, our seminaries and Bible colleges must consider ways of using computers and computer technology in instruction. The Internet is a vast source of material. We need to teach our students how to use it. Teaching courses on line is a very common practice even with seminaries in the western world. This is something that we must be developing in Africa. Using web sites and blogs and face book and other technology to help develop and present a Christian message from a mature church to all who need it, must become one of the priorities of contemporary African theological education.

Culturally Sensitive Education

Nearly all of the original theological education in Africa was started by non-Africans. Naturally the kinds of institutions they created reflected their own backgrounds and cultures. Exegesis and Biblical theology is or should be done the same anywhere in the world. However, practical or professional courses must be taught so that the application will be culturally appropriate. Ever since Africans took over the education of these kinds of courses from the expatriates, these kinds of practical courses have become more and more contextualized. However, it is time that Africans make an even more deliberate effort to evaluate the practical and professional courses to make sure that they are using culturally relevant approaches. Africa has a deep well of traditional culture. It must not be ignored when it comes to Christian ministry. Here are two specific examples.

Counseling is one of the most important responsibilities of pastors. Much of counseling in the western world uses the non-directive kind of counseling in which the counselor only asks questions and guides the counselee in drawing out the answers from within. The counselor seldom gives personal opinions. This is not a form of counseling that has been used very much in Africa. African counselors listen to and ask question but then make specific suggestions and the counselees often simply obey what they have been advised to do, especially when that advice comes from an older or respected person. Counseling, like other forms of communication, takes into consideration human nature but counseling is also culture specific. Therefore, the counseling courses in our theological educations must make sure that they are not just a reflection of western counseling philosophy but are indeed using appropriate traditional African counseling techniques and practices.

Second, many of our homiletics textbooks come from the West which has its own styles of communication. In our homiletics and communication classes, there should be some attempt to understand and strengthen traditional African communication styles. These include techniques like singing, drama, story telling and proverbs. Every African preacher should be encouraged to utilize and improve those techniques of communication that have been used by Africans for centuries.

A mature church requires more advanced educational and professional techniques. Theological education in Africa must respond positively to that requirement.

Theological education must make sure its students and staff keep warm hearts

We get some insight into the issue of second, third and fourth generation churches from the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. This book was written about 60 years into the church age. That means that some parts of the church were third and fourth generation Christians at that time though most of these seven churches were probably second and third generation Christians. In Revelation, John presents some thoughts that Jesus himself had about seven of the churches in Asia Minor. It is interesting that three of these seven second or third generation churches in the Book of Revelation exhibited similar problems.

- Ephesus had lost its first love (2:4).
- Sardis was spiritually dead (3:1).
- Laodicea was spiritually lukewarm—neither cold nor hot (3:15).

These are all spiritual problems that imply some kind of spiritual degeneration. If three of the seven churches faced serious spiritual problems as they approached the third and fourth generation of Christendom, it is likely that that is going to happen to other churches passing from the third to the fourth generation, including the churches in Africa.

Therefore, there is a great need in our seminaries and other theological institutions to stress personal spiritual formation. If we turn out good exegetes and good theologians and good preachers and good administrators but they are not also godly people, we will create churches like Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea. Therefore, we must make sure that our theological education includes those personal spiritual exercises such as worship, prayer and personal Bible study. Our chapel services must not be just routine events that give our students a break from their normal academic engagements. They should be warm and engaging and should receive the most careful planning and implementation. Let us not contribute to the popular myth that serious academic study will result in spiritual deadness.

Conclusion

The church in Africa has reached an advanced level of spiritual and organizational maturity. It now stands tall and strong as a mature church. However, this has serious implications. It means those of us involved in theological education must reevaluate how we are preparing the next generation of Christian leaders. Will our theological education continue to mature along with the church as a whole or will we continue to provide third generation training for a fourth generation.

¹ Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 285

² Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS) has 550 Nigerian theological institutions on its mailing list.

³ We are “born again,” (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:23) implying that, immediately after our conversion, we are “children” (1 Corinthians 14:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; Hebrews 5:13). However, we “grow up” (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 2:3; 2 Peter 3:18). We become strong enough to do the Lord’s work (Romans 16:12; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12) but eventually we reach a level of maturity and respect that is parallel with fatherhood (1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2: 11; 1 John 2:13, 14). At that point we have reached a level of spiritual maturity that might be called Christian adulthood.

⁴ Obviously parts of the Coptic Church in Egypt and Ethiopia were planted in the first century and contain one of the oldest branches of Christianity in the world. Also even in the modern

African church, there are some sections that have been in existence longer than four generations and some shorter. However, when all of this is averaged together, the church, particularly in Nigeria, is basically a third or fourth generation church.

⁵ Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa*, Africa Christian Textbooks, Bukuru, 1977, pp. 343-344

⁶ There is no attempt made in this paper to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the early missionary-sponsored theological education. For some insight on this, see Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, Penguin Books, Middlesex, England, 1964, pp. 516ff. A two-word summary of Neill's evaluation of missionary education was that it was "gravely inadequate" (p. 519).

⁷ The generations referred to in this paper are more properly phases and not necessarily specific time periods representing the average life cycle of individuals. Some parts of the body of Christ probably passed through these three phases in less than three chronological generations and some probably took longer.

⁸ A negative illustration of this is the ongoing war on terror that is being lead by the US. This war was launched with only a limited understanding of the Islamic and Arabic worlds. Thus significant mistakes were made in its planning and implementation due in part to the predominantly mono-cultural, mono- religious and America-first perspective of the American decision makers.

⁹ See E. P. T. Crampton, *Christianity in Northern Nigeria*, rev. ed. (Bukuru: ACTS, 2004), pp. 162-69.

¹⁰ The Assemblies of God entered Nigeria in 1930 but they began working with 32 existing indigenous bodies that had experienced at least some of the Pentecostal phenomenon. See Falk, p. 347.

¹¹ In a paper I presented to the Theological Education in Africa Conference, Jos, Nigeria on 6 June 2008, I outlined four additional contemporary issues beyond the three presented in this paper. These include: HIV/AIDS, corruption, pornography and secularism. This is obviously not an exhaustive list.

¹² Crampton, p. 168

¹³ The following is the second of the four paragraphs of the Nigeria Christian Creed on Governance:

We recognize that governance is an honourable service to humanity. Thus, we believe Christians should actively seek public office and reflect the beliefs of their faith in their public service as much as in their private lives. We insist that our politicians should be completely honest and fair in the fulfilment of their duties. This means that:

- They must not make promises that they know they cannot fulfil.
- They must take nothing from the government for their personal use other than what has been legitimately approved.
- They must not use their offices to give unfair favours to relatives, friends or others.
- They must not give or accept bribes, favours, positions, honours or any other benefit that would compromise fairness in fulfilling their duties.
- They must seek the prayers and advice of the Body of Christ and regularly report to its leaders their roles in government.

We insist that only those persons with records of excellence in their private lives should be selected for public service and that integrity, efficiency, and good management characterize all public servants.

¹⁴ These include Pandang Yamsat, “A Christian Concept of Politics,” Nr. 28 (April 1995), and P. Ostien and J. D. Gamaliel, “The Law of Separation of Religion and State in the United States: A Model for Nigeria,” Nr. 37 (March 2002).

¹⁵ The Commentary on the Nigeria Covenant explains further:

The whole earth is jointly owned by all the peoples of the earth. Therefore, resources which are jointly shared by others must be carefully preserved and protected so as to maximize their usefulness and to insure their distribution as equally as possible. For example, all people must breathe the same air. Therefore, it is wrong for one person to pollute the air that thousands of others must breathe. . . To protect the purity and safety of water for the whole community, rivers and other water sources must not be contaminated. The unnecessary destruction of tropical rain forests, the wanton killing of endangered wildlife, and the exploitation of mineral and petroleum resources are further examples of poor stewardship. from Nigeria Covenant; Commentary on Paragraph 7; p. 1