

Response

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Rev Djedje offers an excellent contribution to those who desire to understand and minister to the African Church. The challenges to the proclamation of the holiness message that the author brings up seem to be common to the entire continent, not only Côte d'Ivoire. His doctrinal thesis is very pertinent to the current interest in African theology, which is by and large oral and therefore limited in space and time, but it is there in all the practices and beliefs of the church.

The modern African church must depend on and be faithful to the Lord and His Word in order to avoid the threat of the inclusivist theologians who preach the uniqueness of the Christian faith but also teach that the God Who is in Jesus also works through other religions. Djedje urges us to decisively distinguish Christian faith from "the African religious background" and to battle against the deformation of the biblical doctrine and its consequences. His concern challenges the preachers of holiness as he points out the necessity of appropriate equipping of the young generation of preachers as well as the importance of delivering the plain biblical doctrine.

It is obvious that the religious structure of any given people is part of their whole worldview. The way we perceive reality affects our religious behaviour. It is important that Christian preachers and teachers consider that African people perceive God through His work and His attributes. God does not act in secrecy. The intent of His work is to move all men to desire Him. He wants us to see beyond our native horizon. This is what Paul states in Romans 1:20 "Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." The problem rests in us, in how the revelation of God is focused and defined. Our mind is under cultural influences that tend to distort the divine revelation, placing our historical experience and aspiration above the divine presence in us. This fact, I think, explains "the spiritual malformation" and "obstacles" that are so well pondered by Rev Djedje.

The author shows his concern with the lack of investment in theological

studies as a way to equip the church with the necessary tools to confront the attraction of the Pentecostal movement. The adoption of Pentecostalism by African independent churches is paying with their rapid growth in membership. We must do more than just condemn their excess and obvious mercenary tendencies. Our theologians must emphasize the biblical doctrine in both their preaching and living. As Imasogie (1983) says, “the role of the Holy Spirit has been neglected in Christian theologising in Africa.”⁷⁶ This is due to the fact that many western theologians need to be convinced of the reality and work of the Holy Spirit. Their acts, teaching, and preaching give great credit to psychological power and very little trust in the spiritual direction of the Holy Spirit. It is evident that the African’s worldview counts on spiritual direction and this is a fertile soil for the preaching of the truth about the work of the Holy Spirit in us. He is the agent of holiness and we are His messengers. What a message we have got for Africa!

McKenna (2002) wrote, “we need to come together on the biblical balance that holiness is, by definition, a holistic doctrine... involves belief and being, command and promise, event and experience, dynamic and discipline.”⁷⁷ It is by faith in His promise that the crisis takes place and it is the blessing of the character of Jesus in our lives that enables us to grow in experience and obedience.

The teaching of the apostle Paul to the Christians of Corinth is relevant to the African context. It is our responsibility to tutor our African brothers and sisters on the difference between the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. As Dunning (1991) says, “the gifts of the spirit may be duplicated.”⁷⁸ Not the fruits. It is imperative that holiness preachers minister to Africans by implementing Paul’s teaching tactic. He corrected the Corinthians’ understanding of the Holy Spirit without denying that the ones involved in certain manifestations of spiritual experience were believers. We also need to teach the importance of love as the true evidence of the Holy Spirit. The blessing of His love (1 Corinthians 13) reduces to less than nothing all the “rings, belts, languages, etc.”

⁷⁶ Imasogie, O. *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa*. Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1983.

⁷⁷ McKenna, D. *Wesleyan Leadership in Troubled Times*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002.

⁷⁸ Dunning, H R. *Sanctification*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1991.

Likewise the teaching and preaching of the new birth in Christ must prove how it differs from the African initiation. The evidence of its effectiveness is not in the mere psychological effects of a ritual, but in the constant, undeniable and transforming might of a personal relationship with God in Jesus.

Rev Djedje also reminds us that the church must address the issue of material reward for those seeking theological profession. The divine call makes it possible for a person to learn “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:12) but when it is time to be hungry and to suffer need, the preacher and teacher of the gospel should not live below the average income of those whom he or she serves. It is a matter of call and stewardship. Both the theologian and the ones he ministers to are called to accomplish a mission in the Kingdom. They both must be good stewards of their different calling and make the best possible contribution to the Kingdom.