

stand. For this reason evangelism should more and more be biblical so that the messages cut across denominational boundaries. Often there has been duplication of effort in evangelism because some denominational requirements must be observed. Training facilities cannot be shared because of doctrinal differences. Is this scriptural among evangelicals?

It must not be imagined that with political independence in Africa there have been secular pressures on the Church of Jesus Christ to conform or to compromise her position. These pressures have come, but on the whole, the church has remained loyal and often the result of such pressures has been remarkable spiritual growth in faithfulness. For instance, faced with the threat of losing one's life for the sake of Jesus Christ, many Christians were able to discover that the gift of enduring pain and suffering for the Master may not be the ultimate reason for the trial. Many were granted the perception that the greater gift was learning to forgive the unrepentant sinner. A word of testimony to the gaoler or persecutor, and an assurance of forgiveness for Jesus' sake, had a much more permanent effect on such individuals than the actual endurance of physical pain and torture.

Christians have discovered under trial that many outward forms of church life are not essential for deep spiritual fellowship in Christ. The secular world also learned that the church of Jesus Christ in Africa is not dependent for survival on any outside group or people, nor on material help however welcome such may be. The power lay in faith in the ever-present help of the Lord of the church and his indwelling Spirit in the believer. This Spirit, of course, they could not see or understand, in accordance with the Scriptures.

And yet, at such times of trial, other members of the body of Christ who looked apparently helpless and could do nothing physically for their suffering brethren were extremely active in praying to God on behalf of his Church Militant here on earth. In other words, it has been during the times of trial that the church has been most active both in deep mutual fellowship and in witnessing to the hostile world around us. We need to remember things so that we may not look for help or encouragement either for the growth or continuing strength of the church of Christ from the wrong direction. The church of Jesus Christ is alive and growing in Africa, perhaps more rapidly than the world realizes. Is this an indication that the Lord's return is near?

HOW TO EVALUATE CULTURAL PRACTICES BY BIBLICAL STANDARDS IN MAINTAINING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN AFRICA REPORT

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Following the reading of the paper by Mr. John Mpaayei the following points were made in general discussion.

- 1) Things that distinguish the different cultures should not be allowed to divide us.
- 2) All cultures are corrupted by the fall of man. We are all prone to ethnocentricity. We are interested in neither Western culture nor African culture in any of their varied forms but in a life-style based on Scripture.
- 3) We agreed with the point made by Dr. McGavran that the best thing that can happen to any culture is for it to meet with the Gospel.
- 4) There is a danger to think in terms of culture being something static and of the past. We must think of it as being dynamic and contemporary.
- 5) The possibility of certain things being attributable to neither God nor the devil but to a third source, the flesh.
- 6) The need to distinguish between the essential and the inessential. Those gathered divided into five groups, three Anglophone and two Francophone. The major questions being asked were then identified.
 - 1) The traditional missionary insistence on monogamy and the prevailing local traditions of polygamy.
 - 2) Whether confession of sin should be public or private.
 - 3) Are certain rhythms intrinsically demonic?
 - 4) Should Bible reading and prayer be individual (Western culture) or communal (African culture)?
 - 5) The question of living standards with reference to sanitation.
 - 6) Involvement in traditional festivals and the eating of food associated with such.
 - 7) The extent of family responsibilities for a Christian in a culture with the extended family system.
 - 8) The problems connected with engagement and marriage, especially those of the ceremony itself.
 - 9) Initiation ceremonies.
 - 10) Dress, including the covering of the head in church.
 - 11) Segregation of men and women in the church and in the home.
 - 12) Naming ceremonies and names.
 - 13) Conditions for baptism.
 - 14) Funerals and funeral rights.
 - 15) Dress for the clergy.
 - 16) Is the African concept of God at loggerheads with the biblical concept?

17) Is a seven-day week to be insisted upon?

18) The problem arising from a leader being a servant in Scripture but a chief in African society.

19) The question of legitimate and illegitimate traditional medicines.

20) Should we either accept or reject offerings from those who are unbaptized or not eligible for baptism.

Some of these questions were considered by the groups. A summary of their findings follows:

Polygamy and monogamy

1) Churches should not condemn polygamous marriages.

2) A person who is polygamous at conversion should be accepted to full Christian (church) membership except for holding office as a bishop or deacon. (Titus 1:6)

3) A polygamous male convert should continue to fulfill all his responsibilities to all his wives.

4) These principles should be administered in such a way as not to encourage polygamy.

5) A polygamous wife on conversion remains faithful to her husband.

6) A convert who voluntarily contracts a polygamous marriage after conversion is disciplined for adultery and normally only re-admitted on full repentance including the discontinuation of the marriage.

It seems that there is an increasing tendency to allow baptism of those involved in longstanding polygamous marriages. Point four above is difficult to implement.

Music-Worship

Africans sing in a minor key. After conversion they sing in a major key. This is only after patient and sustained teaching!

1) Instruments and musical gifts are neither secular nor sacred of themselves, e.g., the organ was originally associated with the massacre of Christians.

2) African culture is richer in gifts of the arts than Western culture.

3) All cultures are vulnerable to the following in their worship:

a. Formalism — concentration on the form and neglect of the content of worship;

b. Love of beauty — leading to cultural arrogance and exclusivism;

c. Hedonism — the substitution of pleasure for sacrifice;

d. Sacerdotalism (spectatorism) — e.g. solos and choirs rather than congregational singing which becomes the pervading life style as laity leave everything else to the clergy;

e. Limiting worship to the mind rather than involving the whole personality.

Only a national can devise his own worship but he must do so in the light of Scripture.

Other points

1) Aspects of African culture should be retained unless and until they are recognized to be specifically non-biblical.

2) To insist on renouncing of local culture erects another barrier to

the Gospel (I Cor. 9:19-23) unless it is specifically non-biblical.

3) There is a need for sustained and systematic teaching on the nature of God. Vagueness on this subject leads to idolatry and tribal deities.

The way ahead

1) The need for African, biblical theologians to meet and give serious consideration to most of the subjects listed items one through twenty, especially the matter of polygamy.

2) The need for regular, sustained and systematic teaching on the nature of God and the law.

3) The need for missionaries to be less ethnocentric and for missionaries and national Christians to investigate the teaching of the Scripture on this whole area.