

## Theological Education and the Mission of the Church in Africa

Mukhanyo Conference 21 June 2018

### I first wish to make some comments on the narratives around 'Africa'.

In some ways we may say that the concept of 'Africa' is a construct of the mind and that there is no such thing as 'Africa'. There are many 'Africas'. While my title has the word Africa in it, I am in fact just thinking of sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa has another whole set of issues, climate, histories and dominant religion.

Then there are different narrative pathways into 'Africa'

- a) The *traditional past of peace and harmony* which was disrupted by the colonial project.. and also by missionaries. Uncover Africa's glorious past and achievements.
- b) *Darkest Africa* is a persistent image first captured in H M Stanley's book of 1890 and continued in Conan Doyle's book *The Heart of Darkness*
- c) Africa as a *moral burden* and Europe's self appointed civilising mission in Africa to backward and uncivilised people. This view was prevalent up to Ian Smith who opined on the whites role is preserving Western, Christian, Civilisation. R Kipling wrote a poem called 'White Man's Burden'
- d) The *tourist image* of big game, Mt Kilimanjaro, beaded Massai warriors and cultural artefacts to buy etc. The Lausanne conference in Cape Town....
- e) *The Hopeless Continent* was the cover title of the Economist in 2000. Africa has unfortunately provided enough stories of wars, coups, dictators, corruption, failing

economies, underdevelopment. Time magazine of January 1984 title was *Africa's Woes; coups, conflict and corruption*.

- f) *Africa Rising* was a later cover story of the Economist in 2011, this time reflecting a more optimistic view.
- g) The *Two Faces of Africa* was the African Business title in June 2014 – Growth versus Stagnation.
- h) Lastly there is a different perspective –consider the people. Africans are amazingly resilient despite incredible hardships. Consider the fact that the numerical strength of the church in Africa which means that many of the suffering populations are brothers and sisters in Christ. Consider too Africa from the perspective that Jesus is Lord and He will work his purposes out in terms of the Kingdom of God. Have we therefore a theology of hope?

So then, in this presentation on **Theological education for the Mission of the Church in Africa**

I want to divide it into two main parts:

**A) How the context in Africa has impacted the theological institutions.**

**I shall do so by way of relating some incidents in my own experience.**

- a) In Ogbomosho, Nigeria I was taking a staff training workshop when the electricity went down and we were plunged into darkness. I looked around in alarm but the locals didn't miss a beat and continued as if nothing unusual had happened.
- b) In Ivory Coast the principal of FATEAC said that he sleeps with the light on so that when electricity comes back on, he gets up to work on his computer.

- c) Two year ago I went to South Sudan to facilitate a process with the board who wanted to reopen their AIC bible college. It had been overrun by the LRA. When they were finally chased out, took doors, windows, generators, bikes etc with them leaving only a shell behind.
- d) On my first visit to Bangui in the CAR I learned that a few year before, rebels from Chad had invaded the city and the campus. They were about to burn the library of 32000 books but the principals wife was Chadian and spoke their language. This saved the library from destruction. Over the six years of my visits things stabilised, in fact improved, only now to have reverted to chaos. The seminary has had to move its doctoral program to Cameroon.
- e) Think of running a seminary in Bulawayo when there was a gizillian percent inflation! Annualised budgeting means nothing. John Stambolie who is here can fill in the details.
- f) I think of the seminary in Bunia, Eastern DRC which was closed 12 years ago because of war and rival militias. Dr Kato was told by the missionaries who had left the country that it was too dangerous to go back and that he should wait until he was given the go ahead. He went anyway. Today there is still a UN peacekeeping force in the town. There was a SA minesweeping company trying to clear mines. It is still dangerous to venture too far out of the town.
- g) Freetown, Sierra Leone is very hilly and so the airport is located on the northern side of a large estuary. It takes 3 hours to drive around the estuary to the city. Or you wait for the ferry to fill up, like our taxis. Or you could fly in an old Russian combat helicopter which rattled and vibrated. The British consulate had forbidden their staff from using it. Six

months after my visit the helicopter crashed and killed the entire Togo football team –the rotor had come off!

- h) On one occasion I flew from Lusaka to Ndola to visit TCCA. Three days later I went to the Ndola airport to discover that the airline had gone bankrupt.
- i) The first time I visited Brazzaville I went with a German fellow. We had visas stamped in our passports. At the immigration point I was asked ‘Where is the letter from the Government?’( equivalent of the statement ‘There is a page missing from your passport.’) I replied that everything the government had asked for was given and that is why I had the visa. No! Where is the letter from the government? And so we were detained. But the principal of the seminary was on the other side of the barrier and he said he would go get the letter. Two hours later there was a phone call.....
- j) A few years ago I was speaking to the temporary principal of Cornerstone Christian College. He had come late to our meeting because early that morning there had been a commotion outside with numerous gun shots and he had responded to a knock on his door. There stood someone bleeding profusely. ‘How do you do theology with blood on your shoes’ was his remark.
- k) The relative poverty of many countries raises questions around the cost of full time residential theological education which has simply become unaffordable. This model is a hangover from the missionary era when faculty, buildings and books all came free from overseas. It is a model which is unsustainable and which creates dependency.

These stories serve to sensitise us to the fact that fellow Christians are running seminaries in contexts very different from the ‘cool’ stable and even detached environment which we enjoy.(mostly). Their context in Africa most decidedly impacts their institutions.

**B) The second aspect to my talk is to look at some of the factors which constitute African Realities and constantly ask ‘How should these realities impact our curriculums?.**

The task at this point was to draw up a list of commonly accepted problems that dominate the African continent. There are many points of view, each coming from a particular region, or personal perspective based on personal experience, or the nature of the organisation, be it a secular government or Church body. A number of sources were consulted from which major issues were extracted and then compared in order to distil out a common core.<sup>1</sup>

**2.1 The ISAR list.** The first list comes from the Institute for the Study of African Realities (ISAR). This Institute is a constituent part of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. The ISAR brochure<sup>2</sup> states “What are the issues facing modern Africa which the church must address? A short list would include:

- AIDS
- Health and Disease
- Economy and Poverty
- Urbanisation and Modernity
- Violence in the home
- War
- Trauma
- Justice/Injustice

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<sup>1</sup> For a striking visual representation of relevant subjects see Worldmapper on <http://www.worldmapper.org> The shape of a continent shrinks or swells according to the rate of the subject being measured. Africa thus is bloated in the map on HIV Prevalence but is skinny on the map depicting wealth.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from an undated NEGST pamphlet promoting the Institute for the Study of African Realities

- Poor Church and state governance
- Education.”

**2.2 The SACLA list.** The second list was taken from the second South African Leadership Assembly (SACLA 2).<sup>3</sup> This large gathering of leaders and laity of most denominations in the country gathered together in 2004 to confront some of the pressing issues facing the post apartheid South Africa. (The first democratic election was held in 1994.) Seven ‘giants’<sup>4</sup> were identified that required urgent attention. They were:

- AIDS
- Crime
- Violence
- Poverty and Unemployment
- Family Crisis
- Racism
- Sexism

**2.3 The Africa Commission Report.** The third source was the *Africa Commission Report* that was released in March 2005<sup>5</sup>. The commission was chaired by the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. The Commission wrestled with the question as to why Africa was the only continent to become poorer over the past 30 years. In contrast, Asia has surged ahead economically despite

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<sup>3</sup> SACLA 1 was convened in Pretoria in 1979 to wrestle with a Christian response to apartheid which was the pressing issue of the day.

<sup>4</sup> The metaphor of ‘giants’ was taken from the story in 1 Samuel 17 in which David confronts his giant, Goliath, and with God’s help prevails over him.

<sup>5</sup> See also [www.commissionforafrica.org](http://www.commissionforafrica.org)

having been poorer than Africa in 1960. The commission identified a set of key, interlocking problems that required urgent attention:

- Good Governance
- Peace and Security
- Investing in People and education

Water Supply and Sanitation

Health and preventable Diseases

HIV/AIDS

- Poverty Reduction.

**2.4 The U.N. Millennium Development Goals.** The fourth set was taken from the United Nations “Millennium Development Goals” to be achieved by 2015. The Millennium Development goals were adopted and signed by 189 countries in 2000. These were global goals, but have acute relevance to Africa which scores badly in relation to most of the goals.

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development.

**2.5. The Common Elements.** In analysing the four lists I extracted the following table:

Common to all four were:

- poverty and unemployment
- HIV/AIDS

Common to three were:

- education concerns
- governance issues
- war, peace, security, violence, trauma

Common to two were:

- women, gender, sexism
- broader health matters like child and maternal health, water and sanitation

Listed only once were:

- family concerns (SACLA)
- racism (SACLA)
- the environment (UN) (we would include today Climate Change)

It is salutary to note that on the United Nations Gender Equality Index that rated 136 countries, African countries filled the bottom 10 places. Of the 42 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries as defined by the World Bank and IMF, 32 are in sub-Saharan Africa. The United



Nations Human Development Index reveals that all the 21 countries classified at the bottom of the list under Low Human Development are indeed African. These bland statements disguise the fact of untold suffering and represent a major challenge to the church to obey the great commandment.

### **Causal Theories**

There are many theories as to the causes of Africa's parlous situation. Books and journal articles abound and we cannot do justice to them all except to make passing reference to some of the theories. We need however to be alert to the fact that simple monocausal theories cannot do justice to the complexity of the problems of so vast and diverse a continent.

#### 1 There are theories based on the **geography** of Africa

Africa has few navigable rivers which has historically prevented easy access into the hinterland. Africa lacks an indented coastline like Europe and this has blocked out the moderating influence of the sea. Africa straddles the equator making it largely tropical with the resultant high rainfall, hot sun and easily leached soils. The people of Africa have suffered the debilitating effects of tropical diseases such as malaria, parasites and water born diseases.<sup>6</sup> The point is made, by way of contrast, that most of the developed nations arose in the healthier temperate mid latitudes. Of the 42 countries classified by the World Bank as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, 39 of them are within the tropics or in desert areas. But progress has been made:

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<sup>6</sup> Another critically important health issue is that of AIDS. That has however nothing much to do directly with the issue of geographical location. But let it be said here that 70% of the worlds AIDS sufferers are on the African continent AIDS has claimed approximately 20 million deaths to date. Life expectancy in some countries has halved. This pandemic has wiped out half the developmental gains of the past 50 years.

In 1990 the access to clean drinking water doubled from 351 mil to 746 million from 1990 to 2012

## 2 There are theories based on the **social history** of the continent

Two observations stand out above the rest. The first is that Africa suffered the ravages of **systematic slavery** for hundreds of years. Early Arab trans-Saharan slave trading, (which included capturing white slaves by Corsairs/Barbary pirates from 16 to 18 centuries) was replaced by the much larger European Atlantic slave trade (Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French and English) in which an estimated eleven million Africans were captured and shipped to the new world of Latin America, (particularly Brazil), North America and the Caribbean over a period of four hundred years. The constant loss of healthy adults was hugely disruptive to African societies. This massive trade would not have been possible without the cooperation and active agency of African chiefs who captured and transported slaves to the coast to be sold to waiting ships. No continent could lose so many people without harmful psychological, political, economic and social effects. There is a well known carving in Angola of a slave sitting dejectedly on the beach with his head in his hands knowing that he would never see his family and village again.

The second major event was **European colonisation**. At first it was haphazard but that changed into full blown imperialism with the ‘scramble for Africa’ in the late nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The ‘scramble’ was regularised by the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885 in an effort to avoid war over the territories.(Pakenham) European powers simply assumed their right to annex

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<sup>7</sup> See Thomas Pakenham’s magisterial treatment of the subject in his *The Scramble for Africa 1876-1912*. London: Abacus 1991.

territory in Africa and to apportion it among themselves. The worst-case example was the Belgian Congo that was actually the personal property of King Leopold of Belgium.

(Hochschild). Lines were drawn on a map without reference to the people on the ground. Thus tribal and language groups were arbitrarily separated (e.g. Massai). Queen Victoria 'gave' Mt Kilimanjaro as a present to her cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm and so it is part of Tanzania today not Kenya. Major language/tribal groups were arbitrarily brought into 'States' but which aren't really countries with any sense of shared history, symbols, values, cultures e.g. The DRC which is a State but which functionally is unable to exercise sovereignty over all of its territory..

Boundaries have continued to be a problem in post colonial times. Existing African kingdoms were overthrown or destabilised (Buganda, Ashanti, Zulu etc).

Transport patterns reflect the extractive goal of the colonial powers because Africa is not well interconnected, its railways tend to run from the interior to the coast in order to export raw materials to the colonial powers. Air routes in West Africa were largely determined by the colonial history of the country. So, French colonies had air links with France and British colonies with the UK. At one time it was quicker to go to a neighbouring country in West Africa by flying back via Paris or London than to fly directly to the nearby country. This has changed dramatically over 10 years. The big airlines with a large footprint are Ethiopian Air, Kenyan Air and South African Airways.

Decolonisation began with the independence of Ghana over 50 years ago. But the colonists left deep scars - as well as some helpful infrastructure. One of the scars has been what Steve Biko, a South African black consciousness leader, called the 'colonisation of the mind'. This sense of inferiority prevents people from fulfilling their true potential. An interesting view is that the colonial regimes ruled without a democratic mandate from the people. They were answerable to

a far off power. Only a few top officials were the beneficiaries of that system. Independent Africa simply inherited and perpetuated a form of government that had been modelled to them – unanswerable to the people and for the benefit of the few.

Under the heading of social theories we might add the view that Africa has a very high ethnic diversity rating as measured against distinct language and ethnic groups. Europe had similar diversity once but a series of ethnic cleansings reduced it centuries ago. The diversity creates the potential for fracture zones within African countries. These had been exploited by colonial regimes in their divide and rule practices, and independent governments have also exploited the divisions for their own ends. The resultant civil wars have been catastrophic. Africa has had more wars over the past 50 years than any other continent with the accompanying highest numbers of refugees and displaced people.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The third cluster of possible causes is **economic**

Africa is an exporter of primary products and commodities that have a low value per ton. What is needed is a strong manufacturing sector to beneficiate the products in order to earn higher revenues. Diamonds should be cut in Africa and not simply sent to Antwerp. Coffee should be processed in Africa where it is produced. Asia, by way of contrast, in 1991 had 80% of its exports from the manufacturing sector while Africa's was 11%. World commodity prices are subject to large price fluctuations that affect the producer country's revenue and lead to boom or bust economies. Africa's share of world trade by value is a mere 2%. But it has recently grown to 3%

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<sup>8</sup> In 2001 there were an estimated 13.5 million displaced people. Gregg Mills *Poverty to Prosperity. Globalisation, Good Governance and African Recovery*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2002.

Africa is the victim of unfair world trade patterns, meagre quotas and stiff tariffs, and low prices. Certain products, such as sugar, cannot compete on the open market nor be exported to the United States and Europe because those countries heavily subsidise their farmers so that African products cannot compete. What Africa needs is fair trade, not more aid. That would break the beggar mentality that so degrades the dignity of people on the continent.

The ramshackle infrastructure in Africa makes doing business very difficult and much more costly and equates to low returns and high costs. Bad roads, long delays at ports, bribe hungry officials, power outages, rickety railway rolling stock, awful communications networks, over regulated economies, bureaucratic red tape, and dysfunctional legal systems, all contribute to the continent's economic woes. These disincentives to business, together with high risk political instability, drive away direct foreign investment<sup>9</sup> and starve countries of much needed development capital inflows. The result? Africa is aid dependent and heavily indebted.

In a recent book, Dr Dambisa Moyo asserts that the cause of most of Africa's problems is foreign aid. 'For most countries, the direct consequence of aid driven interventions has been a dramatic descent into poverty.....The problem is that aid is not benign – in fact aid is malignant.'

(Moyo. 2009:47) Aid is the problem because it feeds corruption, kills local industry, chokes off needed investment, weakens civil society because aid is usually given to governments, creates huge debt burdens and therefore indebtedness to donor nations, fosters unaccountable governments who need donor aid more than being held accountable to the electorate, leads to

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<sup>9</sup> Foreign direct investment has increased recently due to Chinese involvement in Africa. The effects of that have yet to be seen. China's involvement has ended European and American complacency that Africa would always belong to their sphere of influence.

price rises, distorts the local economy and produces dependency. The book is an attempt to answer the question as to why Africa is poor despite being the recipient of US \$1 trillion in aid.

The point of her thesis is that it is not *despite* aid but *because* of aid.

The danger today is of neo-colonialism in the form of economic exploitation once again without having the expense of political colonisation. Africa's off shore fishing resources have been plundered especially by far Eastern fishing fleets. Think of rapacious logging practices or of rhino hunting to take their horns for the Eastern market without any consideration of the impact on the countries.

The illicit outflow of capital by corrupt individuals and, sadly, multinational companies, amounts to \$60 billion a year. From 1970 to 2008 some \$735 billion left Africa and dwarfed the incoming aid of \$180 billion. In this view Africa was a creditor to the rest of the world. These capital outflows deprive the nations of capital for domestic development. If flight capital were reinvested it would increase the GDP, Raise per-capita income and reduce poverty. As always in takes 'two to tango' and Western banks are often the beneficiaries of these stolen millions. China's voracious appetite for resources to feed its economy is perpetuating the old colonial pattern of extracting raw materials from Africa to be processed overseas.

A social factor with economic repercussions is the flight of human capital from the continent. Tens of thousands of people with high level skills have left for greener pastures; doctors, engineers, lecturers, accountants and the like. A recent study of 10 African countries revealed an average loss of 40% of their graduates. About 80% of Ghana's doctors leave the country within 5

years of graduation.<sup>10</sup> The cost to the economy is hard to measure but a continent with a skills shortage to start with cannot but be badly hurt by this brain drain. On the bright side of this story is the fact that the diaspora remit approximately \$8 billion dollars annually back to Africa.

A cultural factor with economic implications is the fact that land is, in many cases, owned in community and thus individuals do not have this as a personal asset to offer as collateral security in order to raise capital for any micro enterprise. In some places the practice of the dead husband's family taking all his possessions leaves the widow with the kids to raise and no money to do that. In communities which are very interdependent there is a strong supportive structure. But equally the 'tall poppy' syndrome can operate in which anyone who excels, does well, stands out, provokes jealousy and is cut down.

#### 4. The fourth cluster of factors is **geopolitical**

This is meant not with reference to colonialism, but to the ravaging effect the cold war had on the continent. African countries were drawn into a series of proxy wars as the superpowers fought out their rivalries around the globe. For example South Africa invaded Angola to fight the Cubans on behalf of the United States. The African proverb is true 'When two elephants fight, the grass gets hurt.' The first, democratically elected president of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, was overthrown with CIA and Belgian connivance because he was a socialist and in his place Mobutu Sese Seko began his rule of massive kleptocracy. This was the first of some 60 coups in Africa. In the infancy of African independence a sorry precedent was set. Many despots were given covert support for their wars in exchange for supporting one of the superpowers. Millions

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<sup>10</sup> *Mail and Guardian* 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Page 14

of Africans perished as a result. Large quantities of weapons, especially AK 47s, were left over from the Cold War era and fuel present day conflicts, although the supply of arms has been privatised. France is alleged to have supplied weapons and military advisers to the Hutu for their ghastly genocide of Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda in 1994.<sup>11</sup> France was implicated in the Biafran war because the French oil company was looking for a secure source of oil to replace its lost oilfields in Algeria at the time of their independence.

Wars correlates highly with poverty because war destroys health services, schooling, agriculture and infrastructure. War does not prove who is right, but merely who is left.

We might add that Western countries self interest included economic interests as well as other political concerns.

Today we need to watch the impact of China on Africa.

Whatever the case, the fact is that Africa is exploited. It is done to.

We should note some slow but positive trends.

The number of conflicts has declined by two thirds from the 1990s.

Twenty five years ago there were only 3 proper democracies. Today there are some 40 democracies. Even if many of the elections were flawed, the trend does represent noteworthy progress.

There is a greater willingness to take responsibility for conflicts within Africa. Peacekeeping today is not relegated to the United Nations alone. African Union peacekeeping efforts are to be found in Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, The Darfur region of Sudan and Liberia.

Efforts are underway to form regional economic groupings to increase cooperation and trade.

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<sup>11</sup> See Roger Bowen 'Genocide in Rwanda-an Anglican Perspective' in Rittner, C, Roth, J. and W. Whitworth. *Genocide in Rwanda. Complicity of the Churches?* Page 46-47.



The Recent AU decision to move towards a visa free continent has had 11 countries sign up already in order to reap the ‘demographic dividend’.. The world demand for commodities that Africa has, is resulting in marked economic growth in some counties. But this is vulnerable to fluctuating international market prices.

In just the past two decades Africa has become better connected through fibre optic undersea cables up both the west coast and eastern seaboard. The uptake of cell phones in Africa has been phenomenal leading to the leapfrogging of communications by bypassing old fixed lines services. Cell phones have a democratising effect because people are able to access information and avoid the state controlled media.

#### 5. The fifth factor is the **failure of leadership**

The noted novelist Chinua Achebe wrote ‘The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.’<sup>12</sup> African governments have failed their people. Leaders have been noted for crazy economic policies. Property rights were violated. The rule of law was ignored. Many leaders were blatantly predatory in enriching themselves by pillaging the government coffers. The sequence is to get high position then get power, then gain access to possessions. Unchecked power was a swift path to riches. Tribalism is easily exploited by leaders and leads to chronic instability and conflicts. This loyalty to clan and tribe spills over into nepotism, ensuring that incompetent people get important jobs. The result is a cult of mediocrity. If Africa were better governed it would be richer. Many African states have been ‘hollowed out’ and they lack the viable institutions and legal instruments and skilful public servants capable of serving the public good.

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Robert Guest *The Shackled Continent. Africa's Past, Present and Future*. London: Macmillan, 2004.

Many of the above factors create the conditions for conflicts to erupt. However “...the inability of governments to manage these issues without conflict reflects a core problem with the African state itself: that the state and its leadership is weak and insecure, and its response to challenges is through patronage, divide and rule tactics, and external aggression towards its neighbours” (Mills 2002. 95). Such a scenario is inimical of long term growth. When the state fails to govern properly, fails to provide strong institutions, fails to uphold the rule of law, fails to provide social services, fails to provide security, then the declines in the economic output will be inevitable and the *Human Development Index* rankings will slip (including measurements of infant mortality, adult literacy, maternal health and life expectancy).

An inescapable fact is the widespread corruption of many leaders. The World Bank estimates that stolen assets reduce the gross national product of Africa by 25%.<sup>13</sup> In resource-rich Nigeria nearly half of the population wallow in poverty, while a previous president is thought to have stolen between \$500 million and \$1500 million dollars from the treasury. Nigeria is the third most corrupt country as measured by Transparency International. But in 2018 two provincial governors have been sentenced to 14 years jail terms for corruption. Guinea has 25% of the worlds known reserves of bauxite as well as diamonds, gold, iron ore yet it is ranked 160 out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index. Why? “Poor governance, weak economic policies and poor infrastructure continue to be major obstacles to attracting much needed foreign investment. In addition, rampant corruption and impunity continue and political freedoms and human rights are diluted.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *International Herald Tribune* 18th September 2007, page 4.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Declining Standards of Living’ in *Africa Today*. January 2007 pages 28-29.

Khulani Qoma writing in the City Press 22 April 2018 says ‘We have been taught to blame everything, including our own weaknesses, on other races. This is learned helplessness in Psychological terms and victimhood in plain terms. ...Instead of working hard to rebuild the continent, postcolonial Africans have been using the ‘tyranny of guilt, to extract resources from the West’. He quotes Bruckner’s assertion that ‘to set oneself up as a victim is to give oneself twofold power to accuse and demand, to cast opprobrium on others and to beg.’ The effect of this is to undermine dignity.

In answer to the question ‘Why is Africa so poor?’ *The Economist*<sup>15</sup> in a special survey of sub-Saharan Africa answers thus, “The best governed places will probably grow the fastest, so African politicians must get the basics right: spend within their means, pass sensible laws and see that they are enforced even-handedly. Until they do, nothing else will move.” This is not a lone voice. In the view of the *Report of the Commission for Africa* “One thing underlies all the difficulties caused by the interactions of Africa’s history over the past 40 years. It is the weakness of governance and the absence of an effective state. By governance we mean the inability of government and public services to create the right economic, social and legal framework which will encourage economic growth and allow poor people to participate in it” (Africa Report. 2005:28).

All of the above discussion is full of doom and gloom but it is only one of the great realities of Africa. The other is the extraordinary **numerical growth of the church**. The social-economic realities undoubtedly impact the daily lives of Christians. They are killed in wars, they are poor,

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<sup>15</sup> *The Economist*. January 17<sup>th</sup> 2004.

they become refugees, and they also fall ill, just like anyone else. The church is the most widespread social institution present on the ground in Africa. Pastors still have status and are by and large well regarded (unlike the West). The question for me is not the extent to which Christians are affected by their contexts, but to what extent do these millions of Christians make an impact on their contexts? To do this, Christian leaders and pastors need to be trained. The huge numbers of Christians in Africa could become agents of social change, certainly in their local setting if not nationally. This is a key assumption behind this paper. But to do this, ministers and laity need training and a sound biblical basis from which to proceed.

I must intersperse three comments. **Faith mission** movements were blessed by the Lord and brought the gospel to Africa at great personal cost. But the Faith Mission movement grew in the soil of Pietism and dualism in which things spiritual were separated from the secular and religion tended to be privatised –it is always personal but never private. The DNA of world denying dualism was transplanted in to the new national church and left Africans without the theological tools with which to engage their contexts. Jan Boer, who was a missionary in Nigeria the fact that Nigerian Christians tend to separate their religion from the daily lives of business, politics and professional life. How could this have come about in a community that arose in the bosom of African Traditional Religion and culture?

The second comment is that our evangelical tradition has had a strong evangelistic tradition but a **weak discipling tradition**. This is exacerbated by the lack of training of grassroots pastors. The WEA research shows that of the 2.4 million evangelical pastors in the majority world, some 80% who have little or no formal theological training. No wonder that the Church in Africa has been

described as being a mile wide and an inch deep. You can't lead further than you have gone yourself.

The third concern is that the '**Prosperity gospel**' is sweeping Africa. It is a form of greed with a religious blessing. At heart it has a Christology which bypasses the Cross of Christ (for the incarnate Christ is surely a poor role model of prosperity) and jumps straight to the Risen, ruling Reigning Lord Jesus who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and if you are a child of the King you deserve to go first class. It turns God into a celestial Father Christmas and avoids all that the gospel demands. It actually fits well into the traditional African world view where a person with a problem goes to a religious functionary such as a sangoma, pays something, the sangoma performs a ritual to contact the spirit world, and then the blessings will come. Humans thus have the ability to manipulate the spirit world in their favour.

C) **We therefore turn now to critically examine the curricula** of evangelical degree-conferring seminaries in Africa through the lens of contextualisation.

## **Urbanisation**

At the time of decolonisation only 1 in 8 people lived in towns. Africa consisted of villages and towns. Today there are 50 cities of over 1 million each. Lagos and Kinshasa will soon be among the top ten most populous cities in the world and are projected to grow to 30 million by 2050.

Within a decade Africa will be 50% urbanised. With this comes problems of urban planning, the provision of potable water, sanitation, housing/overcrowding, education and health facilities.

And jobs. Especially jobs. In 2012 only 10% of young women and 25% of young men were employed in the formal sector. Some cities have more than 50% of their people living in

sprawling slums/high density housing. With this comes structural poverty, threat of bodily harm, lack of sanitation, systemic exploitation, food insecurity, drug trafficking and youth gangs, snarled up traffic jams.

Africa has had a rural past but its future is urban.

Are we teaching a course on urban ministry? How to understand the city. How to exegete the city? Who will win the cities for Christ?

### **Health Issues.**

Malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia deaths result in 1.3 million deaths a year. In 2015 95% of global infant deaths under the age of 5 were in Africa. But there has been a 45% drop between 1990 -2012. And there has been a decline in malaria deaths of 33% due to the campaign to distribute Insecticide Treated Nets. Infant mortality rates is still alarmingly high. Angola has 96 deaths per 1000 live births, CAR has 92.

Due to malnutrition some 35% of children are rated as stunted in their growth.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is well known. It does, of course, impact on congregational members and is thus a pastoral concern. In South Africa there is an 80% correlation with TB where we have 929 TB cases per 100000 in contrast to the UK which has 3-6 per 100000.

Medical care was one of the standard methods of mission historically. Does the church have a role to play today? Does your seminary have a course on HIV/AIDS (prevention, testing, medical aspects, treatment, nutrition, care for the ill, home based care for the terminally ill, bereavement).

## **A Youthful Continent**

In Africa there are 34 million orphans largely caused by war and AIDS. We have 1:3 of the world's orphans.

The population of children in Africa will rise between 2010-2025 by 130 million. All other continents have a declining birth rate and hence an ageing population profile. Currently 41% of our people are under the age of 15.

Think of the challenge to provide education. Only 12 African countries are close to achieving universal primary education. When resources are scarce girls are less likely to be sent to school. UNICEF estimates that some 50 million children could be classified as child labour.

Think of the problem of child soldiers who were kidnapped into militias and traumatised and brutalised.

How would these facts impact on a seminary course on youth ministry? I observed that many churches in Africa, being led by older men, simply do not cater for children. I read a book on youth work in the USA and the issues were loneliness and existential angst. Problems included self image due to pimples (zits)!

## **Access to Electricity.**

Seen from space, Africa is indeed a dark continent. Currently about two thirds of Africans do not have access to reliable electricity (Economist Nov 11 2017) and this correlates with the poverty index. It affects schools, clinics, industry and homes. Frequent blackouts impact small businesses revenues. But things are changing. Ethiopia's Millenium dam will soon generate and export electricity to neighbouring countries. The advent of renewable energy might revolutionise the problem. National grids are costly to erect and maintain but micro grids and mini rooftop solar installations will provide power more cheaply to rural areas. Prices for these systems are falling

rapidly. This could be another example of leapfrog development in Africa. Once there is electricity, people rapidly adopt a range of other technologies such as water pumps.

### **The Right Connections**

The ramshackle government operated land lines are rapidly being surpassed by cell phones. Within a few years hundreds of millions of Africans were able to bypass monopolistic government fixed lines. For every 10% increase in mobile phone penetration it is estimated that the GDP speeds up by around 1% per year. Mobile phones and broadband computer links facilitate mobile money transfer such as by Mpesa. (It is reinventing banking!) Where there is good broadband, it has led to increase in start up companies and exports. Undersea fibre optic cables now connect Africa to the world as never before. Since 2015 the capacity of undersea cables has doubled.

In this regard Africa is an example of the 'Leapfrog Model' of development by bypassing a number of incremental intermediate technologies to modernity.

Mobile aps can be used to train rural midwives, to access markets. Seminary course can be sent out on smart phones.

### **Conflict and Peacebuilding**

Africa has the greatest number of refugees at present due to the war in South Sudan and other areas of conflict. War destroys infrastructure, health and education provision and the economy. Rape is a weapon of war. Some 200000 women are estimated to have been raped in the conflicts in the Eastern DRC.

Children are pressed into becoming child soldiers and in so doing lose their childhood, education and are brutalised in the process.



Can the Church play a role as peace builders? What training would these Christians need to do so?

I must stop. I have not spoken about *climate change* (do you have a course on the Theology of Earth keeping?), nor about the critically important matter of *job creation* to address poverty and unemployment, Nor about *gender issues* –and I don't mean burn the bra feminism but the plight of the majority of the members of the church in Africa, nor the *spread of Islam* in Africa, nor about *servant leadership* in the pattern of Jesus .

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Do you agree with the list of African Realities or do you wish to add or subtract anything?
- 2a. If these are indeed an accurate list, what then is your seminary doing in its curriculum to prepare students to minister effectively in Africa.
- 2b. Do you think that the Church has a valid role to play in engaging redemptively with some of these issues?

Bill Houston D Min

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