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CONTEXTUAL PREACHING IN
CONTEMPORARY GHANA:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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by

Michael Sowa

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ABSTRACT

For over one and a half centuries now, Christianity has made great inroads into the Ghanaian belief system at least in principle. However, a critical evaluation of its performance shows that there is much to be desired in terms of the depth of its penetration into the fibre of the people. Thus in Ghana today, one finds Christians who divide their loyalty between Christianity and the religion of their forefathers.

This study critically appraises the methodology of early missionary preaching and teaching and proposes the contextual approach as the best possible way to make the Christian religion 'native' in the Ghanaian soil. Chapters two and three have taken a retrospective view of the concept of contextualization and the socio-cultural context of Ghana respectively. The fourth chapter calls for the devising of a methodology which will stimulate the development of appropriate local theologies and Christologies capable of meeting local needs. Additionally some relevant themes have been suggested for addressing certain misconceptions inherent in the Ghanaian belief system.

Finally, the paper suggests the integration of traditional Ghanaian customary practices, values and

ideals which are neither idolatrous nor satanic into the Church's overall worship system. In the same vein, workable Christian alternatives should be found for such customary rites which have been found to be incompatible with biblical doctrine.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has exposed two main weaknesses in early missionary preaching and teaching in Ghana in particular and Africa as a whole. These are inability to take into serious consideration Ghanaian worldview, culture, customs and traditions in their methodology. The other being the calculated attempt to transplant onto the Ghanaian soil foreign theology and foreign worship patterns. These have not augured well for the deepening of the roots of the Christian Gospel in the Ghanaian soil. Thus the popularity which Christianity seems to enjoy among the Ghanaian people is deceptive, or at best, superficial.

To arrest the situation, the urgent need has arisen not only for contextual preaching but also a contextualized theology in Ghana. It is believed that for the Christian message to 'germinate' and 'take root' in the Ghanaian soil, it must employ local cultural symbols as vehicles for its proclamation. This is because there are rich elements in the Ghanaian belief system which can be employed as the basis for the explanation of certain vital truths. The Ghanaian's deep knowledge

about God is one of those elements which can be a very vital basis for a deeper explanation of the Christian doctrine of God.

Through contextual preaching and teaching of the Gospel,

Jesus Christ will so confront the peoples of Africa (Ghana), that in him and through him, they will have access to God whom they already acknowledge in their traditional ideas, to be the Creator of all things. Jesus will be known, among other things, as the One who strengthens kingship between man and man and the One who established kingship between man and God. In this manner the eternal Gospel of the incarnation will begin to accommodate itself in the African (Ghanaian) environment, making its challenges felt and promises realized.

In this way the meaning and essence of Christian preaching which is the persuasion of people to God through Jesus Christ will be actualized.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations have become necessary. First, pastors, ministers, evangelists and other gospel workers must ensure that their preaching is geared toward the development of fresh theology done with Ghanaian resources and rooted in the realities within the Ghanaian society. Put in another way, preaching within the Ghanaian

¹John Mbiti, "The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel," In Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International African Seminar, ed. by C. G. Baeta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 342.

context must speak to the actual questions Ghanaians are asking in the midst of their daily struggles for existence. This entails a departure from the hitherto philosophical Euro-American type of preaching in favour of a more pragmatic approach. Preaching that is geared towards providing solutions for poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease, illiteracy, unemployment, bribery and corruption and other social and political issues facing the people today.

Secondly, preaching within the Ghanaian context should emphasize that one does not need to become an American or a Briton in order to become a good Christian. In other words, one can become a born-again Christian and yet remain Ghanaian. For example, the Ghanaian bearing the name Akwasi Mensah can be as good a Christian as anyone else without necessarily changing his name. This calls for preaching that will enable the Ghanaian to see his cultural and social heritage as gifts from God and contribute his or her quota towards the overall development of his society.

Thirdly, ministers of the Gospel should interpret Scripture to make it speak to the Ghanaian worldview. This demands properly analyzing Scripture, applying hermeneutical and exegetical principles so as to unearth the actual meaning and then applying the meaning to the

