

NBT S  
M.Th  
Au 24t

A THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO  
THE SCANDAL OF  
CHRISTIAN PARTICULARITY

by  
Moses Audi

J. C. POOL LIBRARY  
BAPTIST SEMINARY  
OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

June, 1997

## CONCLUSION

Summarily, this paper has revealed that Christianity is facing a non-ending challenge both from outside and inside of the Church. The challenge from outside grows as a result of the unreconcilable grounds for the existence of Christian particularity along side other religions or philosophies; while the challenge from inside grows out of a sympathy for the ones outside the benefits of Christianity or from the conspicuous failure of the Church.

Therefore, what served as fertile soil for particularity problems in Africa include:

1. The Growth of Pluralism

Chapter one discussed three religious groups and some philosophies of life leaving out lots more. Pluralism has brought lack of unity and peace between different groups and nations in Africa. This produced the atmosphere for formulating solidarity groups and the eventual call to dialogue and ecumenism. It has provided a soil for considering liberal theologies that attempt to give other religions a place.

2. The Early Denial of the Value of African Worldview to Christianity

This came about as a result of the consideration of the African as religionless. It contributes to the

problem of particularity in Africa by the resurgence of culture solidarity which reincarnates African religions on the platform of socialization as an extreme reaction to the rejection of an African worldview. It also forms the basis for the development of liberation theologies, prosperity theologies and independent church movements.

### 3. The Inadequate Training of African Theologians

This also is the result of distrust in the ability of African quality. The few that are trained had their training in the context of Western worldview, equipping them to develop Western theologies as "ecclesiastical tablets" for Africa. This makes the consideration of Christianity as a Western religion possible. It also reduced Christianity to a body of doctrines of traditions for many. Hence the sympathy for other religions in Africa.

The above situation produced the challenge on Christian particularity in the different categories alluded to in this paper.

Consequently, a response that will have lasting results is needed if Christianity will have genuine impact in Africa. The basis for the church to respond is the value of the Christ event which is not found in any other way. Biblically this particularity came about as the last resort to providing a remedy to sin. It took ultimately God's grace and initiative in order that mankind will find meaning in and enjoy life with "peace

that transcends human understanding" (John 14:27; 16:32). It is also a provision for all humanity with the criterion of faith in the provision.

The response of the Church therefore, cannot be casual in the face of the contemporary need for transformation. It must be seen as a responsibility for humanity and to God. The Church must keep in mind the need the response is supposed to accomplish, namely, regeneration and restoration of humanity to God. The venture must be love motivated; hence devoid of violence. The task may demand the taking of risk for its course as it might be resented. This response must be made relevant to the Church and the world.

This implies that the Church need not allow animosity against its faith to engineer a change of its essence. Such agitations must help the Church evaluate its success and plan for meaningful ministry. Moreso, it makes the Church consciously see how its faith relates to every resentment raised. In order to carry out the task of the Church further, a few steps are recommended below.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

With all that is discussed so far, it becomes expedient to ask: How will the Church go about giving response that will take the time, situation, and context into account? With every change in time, situation and

context the required response assumes a different facet. These steps are intended to assist in this.

### Developing a Theology of Responsibility

African theologians need to see themselves as responsible in the problems of the masses in Africa and to God. Many African theologians see their training as being solely personal and at most address a few things in their sermons. Some of them also see their training as learning things you don't have to relate to daily living. This does not instill any interest for them to find out how it relates to the existence of their people.

It is therefore time to join a few who are struggling to contribute their best for productive faith experience in Africa. A theology of responsibility helps the theologians remain responsible in spite of the criticisms. It removes the possibility of leaving what one is supposed to do for another. Everyone begins to see the problem as having a personal dimension - not in a way to become aggressive, but be concerned for the people's genuine salvation. If the person responding does not think Christianity offers salvation, the best is not to identify with it since he may not be a Jew. If as an African one accepts Christ only as an alternative, such did not show responsibility to his/her God-given culture. Ways to be responsible are to hold the Christ event in its place and help people understand it rather than disdaining it before those who do not know

what it is. Observably, at dialogue settings, it is only the Christians who think of how to keep their particularity away and start talking of similarities. The representatives of other religions do not change their own stand even if it differs from that of others. The action of the Christian representatives does not show that they know what Christianity is. Their action which is begun with the intention of doing the people good, ends up being a disservice to humanity and a ridicule of God's providence.

In order to realize meaningful theology, the Church in Africa needs to:

1. Take informal and formal theological training seriously. In most places in Africa, provision is not made to help new converts grow adequately, some of whom eventually become theologians or church leaders. This creates room for sympathy to ideologies since the God-given love is there in the heart but without adequate training to back it up.

Training at informal level needs to help the African Christian grow in faith. At formal level, it needs to help him or her develop adequate tools to build on and respond adequately to faith related issues.

There is need to also periodically evaluate the content of the training to help maintain the relevance of the Christian message.

2. Take keen interest in missions and periodically examine missionary strategies in Africa. Most Christian

