



African Theology and Religions

Study Guide

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Lecture Outlines

Lecture I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE; INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW OF AFRICA



I. Course Description

This course is an introduction to Christian theologizing in Africa against the background of African cultures and religions. Since Africa has witnessed a rapid expansion of the Christian faith, it is imperative that people interested in Christian ministry in the continent should familiarize themselves with the major issues involved in developing authentic Christian theology within the contemporary context of the continent. After a brief examination of how to study and understand Africa, the course will focus on factors which led to the debate on Christian theologizing in Africa. Descriptions and analyses of African religions will be provided. African theology will be studied in depth.

II. Course Objectives

- A. To familiarize the student with the continent of Africa as Christianity's most fertile soil.
- B. To introduce the student to the major issues of the study of African religions.
- C. To sketch the history and development of African Christian theology.
- D. To examine specific African proposals for African theology.
- E. To ascertain what lessons can be learned from Africa by the rest of the worldwide Christian Church.

III. Required Textbooks

IV. What is Africa?

- A. Popular Images of Africa
 1. Complete ignorance

Lecture Outlines

2. Africa as “land of deepest darkest heathen night”
- B. Africa: A Continent of Bewildering Diversity
1. Paradox as a description of the African condition (Ali Mazrui)
 2. The Three Major Geographical/Cultural Divisions of Africa: Arab North Africa, Central/Black Africa, Southern/White Africa
- C. Present African Realities: Implications for Christian Ministry



Lecture II

AFRICA AND CHRISTIANITY: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

I. Introduction

Purpose of the lecture: To review the status of Christianity in current Africa against the background of Africa’s paradoxes.

II. Seven Opinions on Africa and Christianity

- A. Africans Are Latecomers to Christianity.
- B. Christianity Is an African Religion (Byang Kato)
- C. “Africa, not Rome, Gave Birth to Latin Christianity” (Dean Milman)
- D. Christianity Failed in North Africa Because it Did not Evangelize the Surrounding Peoples (C.P. Groves)
- E. Islam Is an African Religion, Christianity Is the White Man’s Religion
- F. Something Always New Comes out of Africa. (Pliny the Elder)
- G. Africa Is as Dark, Primitive and Zoo-like as the Orient Is Mysterious, Mystical and Mystifying (T. Tiénou)

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III. Setting the Record Straight

- A. African Christianity Is as Old as Christianity Itself
- B. The Three Historical Phases of the Christianization of Africa
 1. Early African Christianity (from Pentecost to Muslim invasions of North Africa)
 2. Portuguese Efforts in Southwestern Africa (Fifteenth century)
 3. Modern Missions Efforts in Africa (Nineteenth century to present)

IV. The Make-up of Early African Christianity

- A. Egyptian Christianity
- B. North African Christianity
- C. Ethiopian Christianity
- D. Nubian Christianity

V. Lessons from Early African Christianity

- A. Persecution and Internal Controversies Are not Always Ingredients for Strengthening the Church
- B. Dependence on the Outside is Detrimental
- C. Loss of Spiritual Vitality is Deadly
- D. Distance between Clergy and Laity is Unhealthy
- E. Marriage of Church and State Mutes the Witness of the Church
- F. Isolation from Other Churches is Stifling
- G. Necessity of Generating Leadership from within the Church

Conclusion: Christianity is indeed an African religion. Contemporary African Christianity needs to recover the importance it once had in global Christianity.



Lecture Outlines

Lecture III

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN AFRICA

I. Identity as an Important Factor in Contemporary Africa and for African Theology

“Modern African theology emerges as a theology of African Christian identity” (K. Bediako)

II. Identity as a Major Issue for Contemporary Africans

A. The Importance and Implications of the Complex Reality Called the European Factor in Africa

B. The Necessity of Africans’ Self-Definition

C. The Distortion due to Westernization

D. The Non-Specificity of the Term “African”

III. The Legacy of Colonialism and the Quest for Identity in Africa

A. The Search for a Usable African Past as a Reaction to European Domination

B. African Identity and Past Defined as “Being Different from That of Europe”

C. Search for Identity as the Common Denominator of African Philosophy and African Theology

IV. The Importance of Placide Tempels’ *Bantu Philosophy* in the Quest for Identity in Africa

The Bantu (i.e., the Africans) Are Human Because They Have a System of Thought

V. Leo Apostel’s Four-Stage Understanding of the Quest for African Identity

A. Africans are Children to be Reared by the West (They Are Pre-Logical)



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B. African Philosophy is Qualitatively Different from Western Philosophy (Glorification of Ethnophilosophy)

C. Philosophies Are Produced by Individuals, not Cultures (Rejection of Ethnophilosophy and Collective Philosophy)

D. Synthesis of the Second and Third Stages

Conclusion: The Quest for African Identity is relevant for the debate on African Theology.



Lecture IV

THE STUDY OF AFRICAN RELIGIONS: HISTORY, METHODS AND DEFINITIONS

I. Introduction: Background and Context for the Study of “African Traditional Religions”

II. The History of the Study of African Religions

A. The Inadequacy of Nineteenth Century and Anthropological Terminology

1. African religions as a variety of “primitive or primal religion”
2. African religions as examples of “savage religion”
3. African religions as “native” religions
4. African religions as “tribal” religions
5. African religions as examples of “paganism”
6. African religions as “heathenism and idolatry”
7. African religions as “fetishism”
8. African religions as “animism”

B. What Is the Appropriate Term to Describe African Religions?

The need to be as specific as possible: use ethnic names as modifiers of religion (i.e., Yoruba religion for instance)

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Lecture V

THE STRUCTURE OF AFRICAN RELIGIONS

I. Introduction: Orality and the Study of the Structure of African Religions

The lack of “Sacred Scriptures” preserving the teachings of African religions means that the structure of African religions is implicit

II. Worldview Assumptions Undergirding the Structure of African Religions

A. Unity Is the Fundamental Characteristic of All Reality

1. All living organisms are interrelated
2. There is no gap between human beings and nature

B. African Worldview is Essentially Anthropocentric

III. Elements of Beliefs Deriving from African Worldview Assumptions

A. Ancestors Rule and their Traditions are Communicated Orally

B. Belief in a Creator God, Although He is Distant and Unknown

C. Focus on the Clan, Importance of Birth and Initiation Rites for Life-Affirming Purposes

D. Belief in Good Spirits

E. Belief in Evil Spirits

F. Belief in Divination and Spirit Possession

G. Importance of Festivals and Rituals

H. Belief in Reincarnation

I. Belief in Afterlife, Perceived as a continuation of Present Life



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J. Emphasis on Duty, Past Tradition and Shame

IV. Structural Implications of Worldview Assumptions for African Religions

A. Hierarchy of Beings

1. The supreme being
2. Other beings and deities, ancestors
3. Present living community

B. Relationships and Values

If the structure is drawn as a circle, it would show:

1. Man at the center
2. Spiritual beings (inferior and superior to man) as well as other men at the circumference

C. Mediation and Harmony: Chief Concerns of African Religions

V. The Structure of African Religions Illustrated: The Bobo of Burkina Faso and Mali



Lecture VI

THE NATURE OF THEISM IN AFRICAN RELIGIONS

I. Introduction: Anthropocentrism and the Problem of Theism in African Religions

According to the Yoruba of Nigeria, life is essentially good and ideally people should achieve health, prosperity, fulfillment, honor and progeny in the world. Yet the world is not an ideal place. The presence of evil forces in the world tends to frustrate people's destiny. In this context the purpose of religion is to prevent misfortune and maximize good fortune. God, the Supreme Creator, is benevolent but uninvolved in human affairs. The *orisha*, thought to be God's children, intervene in human affairs, for good or evil. This raises the problem of the nature of the theism behind such views.

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II. African Religions Are Focused on the “Lesser Divinities”

What conclusion should one draw from the above observation?

- A. *Polytheism* Best Characterizes African Theism. (Many Anthropologists)
- B. *Monotheism* is the Best Description of African Theism. (Many Contemporary Africans)
- C. African Religions Have *Ontological Monotheism* but Live *Liturgical Polytheism*.

III. Divine Functions and the Concept of Theism

- A. Africans View Creation and Governance as the Two Divine Functions. (J. Ukpong)
- B. The Supreme God Alone is the Creator and He Was Most Active at the Time of Creation
- C. The Supreme God Decided to Share the Governance of the world with Other Beings
- D. The Supreme God’s Nearness Is Mediated through the Various “Lesser Divinities”
- E. The “Lesser Divinities” Are *Representations* of God. (J. Ukpong)

Conclusion: Is African Theism “*Bureaucratic Monotheism*”? (O. Imasogie)



Lecture VII

MAN IN AFRICAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

I. African Religions Originate in Questions Concerning the Mystery of Life and Death. (B. Bujo)

- A. Humankind Is the Central Focus

Lecture Outlines

- B. Morality Is a Matter of Relationships Between Human Beings, not Between Human Beings and God

II. Man Is a Being-in-Community

- A. “We are, therefore I am”: Key Perspective for Understanding the African Concept of Man
- B. Sin Is Wrong Done Against Other People and Against the Community

III. Nature of the Individual

- A. The Nature of the Individual Derives from Worldview Assumptions
- B. The Individual (Person) has Multiple Dimensions:
 1. He has a visible mode of existence (the flesh)
 2. He has vitality (breath)
 3. He has feelings
 4. His existence is determined through “race” and descendance
 5. He has an invisible double
- C. The Above Conception of the Nature of the Individual Raises Questions Regarding Christian Anthropology
 1. Such a concept is silent about whether man is a trichotomy or dichotomy
 2. Such a concept emphasizes the survival of the “race” and pays little attention to the survival of the individual

IV. Human Destiny

- A. Continuity Between this Life and Life in the Hereafter
- B. Salvation Is a Return to Life with the Ancestors

V. Implications for Christian Theologizing

- A. The Christian Doctrines Regarding Heaven and Hell Cannot be Taught without Taking the African Idea of Human Destiny Seriously



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- B. Kinship with Christ Supersedes All Natural Kinships
- C. Because Christ Is, All who Are in Christ are Related and Will Live Forever in the Same Community



Lecture VIII

CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN CULTURES AND RELIGIONS

- I. Introduction: Religion is Pervasive in African Life. This Implies that:**
 - A. All Aspects of African Cultures Are Related to Religion
 - B. The Relationship Between Christianity and African Cultures and that Between Christianity and African Religions Must be Studied Together
- II. Contemporary Context for the Study of Christianity and Cultures**
 - A. Bangkok, 1973: Salvation Today
 - B. Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, 1974
 - C. Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches
 - D. Nairobi, 1976: Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly
 - E. Willowbank, Bermuda, 1978: Consultation on Gospel and Culture

Key Questions:

- How do we Christians deal with the diversity of cultures on the world?
- How des culture affect and shape the expression of the Christian faith?
- How does Christianity relate to cultures?
- Culture is all encompassing and has an integrative function.

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One's attitude towards culture conditions the theological methodology employed.

III. Christianity and African Cultures: Lessons from the Second and Third Centuries A.D.

- A. Tertullian of Carthage: Radical Discontinuity Between the Gospel and Culture
- B. Clement of Alexandria: Continuity and Compatibility Between the Gospel and Culture

IV. Observations on Christianity and Culture

- A. Culture Influences How One Views and Lives Christianity
- B. Gospel Judges Culture

V. Christianity and African Religions

- A. Call for Pastoral Attention to African Traditional Religions, Catholic Bishops of Africa, 1988
- B. Dialogue Between Christianity and African Traditional Religions Perceived as Central to Theology of Inculturation in Africa (Ikenga-Metuh)
- C. African Religions Are within the Scope of General Revelation
- D. Are African Religions a Pre-Requisite for African Christian Theology (Ikenga-Metuh)?
- E. Christianity and African Religions Relate through a Process of Continuity and Discontinuity

VI. Revelation and Human Religions in Scripture

- A. The Old and New Testaments Indicate that Non-Christian Religions Show that All Human Beings Seek God and have a Certain Knowledge of Him
- B. The Seeking of Non-Christian Religions Is at the Same Time a Deformation of the Knowledge of God. Non-Christian Religions Are Therefore Ambiguous: They Promote the Knowledge of God but They Suppress It at the Same Time



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C. Non-Christian Religions Cannot Provide a True Knowledge of God



Lecture IX

TWO NINETEENTH CENTURY VISIONARIES OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY: MOJOLA AGBEBI AND WILLIAM HUGHES

I. Introduction: The Lives, Vision and Work of Two Nineteenth Century Pioneers Can Help Clarify the Current Debate on Africanizing Christianity

A. Both Agbebi and Hughes Wrestled with This Two-fold Question: Should Christianity in Africa Continue to Bear the Mark of Foreignness and Can One Be Both Authentically African and Authentically Christian?

B. “Let *African* Christians be *Christian* Africans” (B. H. Kato)

II. Mojola Agbebi (1860-1917)

A. Born David Brown Vincent, “Africanized” his Name on August 24, 1894

B. Church Reformer and Political Agitator, He Founded the First “African” Independent Church in the Colony of Lagos, the Native Baptist Church

C. Four Lessons from Agbebi’s Legacy:

1. How does a transplanted church from Europe or America become truly African?
2. How can the churches of Africa acquire an identity of their own?
3. How can the church deal with nationalism so that it may be free to be part of a universal whole?
4. African churches need to develop a spirit of cooperation so as to escape narrow denominationalism

D. Elements of Agbebi’s Thought:

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1. African Christians need to cooperate with missionaries and give them due recognition for their contributions to the continent
2. European Christianity must be distinguished from Biblical Christianity
3. The church must acquire an African personality
4. African hymnody and liturgy must be developed



III. William Hughes, near contemporary of M. Agbebi

- A. A Welshman, He Founded the African Training Institute in Colwyn Bay (North Wales) and Was its Director from 1889 to 1912
- B. Hughes Was a Supporter of African Initiatives in Christianity
- C. Hughes Promoted the Training of Africans. He Reasoned that Trained Africans Would Do for Their People What Foreigners Could not Do
- D. Hughes Labored for the Contextualization of the Christian Faith in Africa and for Cooperation Between Africans and Europeans
- E. The Training of Africans is Important for the Evangelization of Africa by Africans

Lecture X

ROOTS AND BIRTH OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY

- I. **Introduction: Purpose of the Lecture Is to Examine the Context of the Modern Discussion on African Theology**
 - A. The Search for an African Christian Theology Continues the Trend Set by the Precursors
 - B. Present Discussions of African Theology Began in the 1950s and, in Some Ways, the Agenda Set in that Time Still Dominates

Lecture Outlines

II. The Quest for Emancipation and the Beginnings of African Theology

- A. African Reactions to Colonialism and Missions
- B. The Impact of Political and Cultural Developments of the 1950s on African Theology
 - 1. Creation of African organizations for cultural and political selfhood
 - 2. 1956: Birth of conscious self-theologizing among Africans associated with “missionary” Christianity

III. The Theological Agenda Set in 1956

- A. Use of Comparative Methodology with Attempts to Rehabilitate African Cultures and Religions
- B. A Theology of Difference: African Theology Is What European Theology is Not
- C. A Cultural Theology: African Traditions and Cultures as a Basis for Developing African Theology

IV. Implications for the Present

- A. African Theology Began and Developed as an Apologetic: Its Audience Was not the African Church but the Theologians’ Peers (whether Europeans or Africans)
- B. African Theology Began as an Effort to Legitimize the Existence of an Indigenous African Theology within the Confines of Western Christianity
- C. Need to Address the Current Concerns of African Christians



Lecture Outlines

Lecture XI

THE CONCEPT OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY

I. Introduction: Christianity Is One Faith Expressed in Many Cultures, hence the Legitimization of African Christianity and African Theology

“You may and you must have an African Christianity.” (Pope Paul VI, Kampala, Uganda, 1969)

II. Definitions of African Theology

A. African Theology is a Discourse on God and on Things Related to Him in Accordance with the Needs and Mentality of the African Peoples (Charles Nyamiti)

Note the broadness of the definition: any form of discourse on God can qualify if it is done “in accordance with the needs and mentality of African peoples.”

B. African Theology Should not Be Confused with Christian Theology. African Theology Is the Interpretation of the Pre-Christian and Pre-Muslim African Peoples’ Experience of their Gods (J. K. Agbeti)

C. Christian Theologizing Should Be Called *African Christian Theology*.

Note: Many African Christian theologians tend to use “African Theology” when they have Christian theologizing in view.

III. What is African Christian Theology?

A. African Christian Theology Is a Plural Reality

B. African Christian Theology Is not about Stating New Doctrines, It Is Concerned with Stating Christian Doctrines in Ways that Are Understandable by Africans and in an African Idiom

C. African Christian Theology Is Theology Produced in Africa



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- D. African Christian Theology Is a Theology Arising out of the Identity of African People
- E. African Christian Theology Is a Theology Drawing on African Categories of Thought
- F. African Christian Theology Is a Theology that Speaks to the Historical Situation of African People

IV. Implications for Evangelicals

- A. Evangelicals Wrestle with This Question: Should We *Christianize* Africa or Should We *Africanize* Christianity? The Question Cannot Be Answered Easily or Simply
- B. Should There Be an Evangelical African Theology? If so, What Would its Characteristics Be?



Lecture XII

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

- I. **Introduction: Importance of Methodology for the Development of African Christian Theology**
- II. **Methodological Imprecision Hinders the Development of African Christian Theology**
 - A. Theological Productions by Africans Tend to be Controlled by the European Medium (Language) through Which They Are Produced and by Concerns of European Academic Centers
 - B. Theological “Colonialism,” “Neo-Colonialism” or “Provincialism” of Africans (and Non-Africans) Means that African Concerns Are not Taken Seriously

Note: “Africa produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.” (E. Kodjo)

III. Nyamiti’s Evaluation of Methodology in African Christian Theology

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- A. African Christian Theology Must Use the Pastoral Approach as its Foundation:
 - 1. Theology is to be defined more broadly to include the living situation of Christians. Pastoral motives determine the nature of theology
 - 2. Theology is both *explication of revealed doctrine* and the *communication* of it in particular contexts
- B. Methodology Grows out of the Pastoral Approach:
 - 1. Apologetic method
 - 2. Pedagogical method
 - 3. Comparative method

IV. The Question of Appropriate “Sciences” for Developing African Christian Theology

- A. Turn to Sciences of Human Self-Understanding
- B. The Weight of Anthropology

V. A Three-Fold Methodology for African Christian Theology

- A. Understanding the Church (Historically and in its Present Situation)
- B. Understanding Culture (both Traditional and Contemporary)
- C. Understanding Scripture

Lecture XIII

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES

- I. Importance of Hermeneutics for Contextual and African Theologies; Limits of Present Lecture
- II. Hermeneutics and African Christian Theologies
 - A. The Nature of Biblical Writings



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1. The question “What is the Bible?” is a necessary prerequisite for dealing with the question, “How is the Bible to be interpreted?”
2. The Bible is not a piece of technical literature in the modern sense.
3. The Bible is not religious literature in the sense of promoting detachment from real world
4. The Bible is “the historical witness to God’s dealing with man and the world” (F. E. Deist)
5. The Bible is both oral and written literature



B. Horizons of Hermeneutics

1. A. Thiselton’s Two Horizon Approach contrasted with “traditional” hermeneutics: The text is culturally specific; the interpreter is culturally conditioned
2. Hermeneutics as a fusion of the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter
3. The need for culturally relevant interpretation

C. Beyond Hermeneutics of Remembrance

1. Culturally relevant interpretation can lead to hermeneutics of remembrance (reading our culture into the Bible or *eisegesis*)
2. Hermeneutics of remembrance defined: “Hermeneutics taking elements from Scripture without understanding them in their total context and seeking to apply them in another context as if the first context was of little relevance or importance in the task of interpretation:
3. Hermeneutics of remembrance legitimized: “All *exegesis* is *eisegesis*” (J. S. Croatto)
4. The horizons of the text and of the interpreter must be kept in tension

Lecture XIV

MAJOR THEMES OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

I. Introduction: Background Issues for African Theology: Culture, Color and Poverty

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II. African Inculturation Theology Deals with Culture

- A. African Inculturation Theology Is an Attempt to Give an African Expression to the Christian Faith
- B. African Inculturation Theology is the Oldest Form of African Theology

III. South African Black Theology Deals with Color

South African Black theology seeks to restore the full human dignity of black people

IV. African Liberation Theology Deals with Poverty

V. B. H. Kato's Concern to Broaden Themes of African Theology in Order to Safeguard Biblical Christianity



Lecture XV

CHRISTOLOGY THROUGH AFRICAN EYES

I. Importance of Christology for the Christian Faith and Christian Theology

The question of relevant CHRISTOLOGY is a particular challenge for African theology.

“Jesus as Guest” as an appropriate Christological paradigm for Africa.

II. Review of African Contributions to Christology

- A. Jesus as Master of Initiation
- B. Jesus as Healer
- C. Jesus as Ancestor

III. Jesus as Guest

- A. This Paradigm Integrates Hospitality with Christology

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- B. Guests Can Cease Being Strangers: They Can Be Incorporated into Families and Thereby Enlarge Them
- C. Guests Can Become Mediators and Power Brokers

The above three statements shed significant new light on the person and work of Christ: He is a stranger to all human families, yet when humans receive Him, He becomes not only one of them but a mediator on their behalf.

- D. The Paradigm of Jesus as Guest Does not, However, Solve All Problems Related to Christology



Lecture XVI

ECCLESIOLOGY IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

- I. Introduction: Little Attention Devoted to Ecclesiology in African Theology**
- II. Basis for an African Ecclesiology**
 - A. The “Great Family,” as a Basis for an African Theology and Ecclesiology (B. Sundkler, H. Sawyerr)
 - B. The Church as the Great Family Relates Ecclesiology to African Kinship Structures
- III. Analysis of Sawyerr’s Argument**
 - A. The Church is the Whole Christ, the Members Being Integrated into One Head
 - B. The Church as the Whole Christ Enables One to Integrate African Ancestors (“it appeals to the true feelings of the African,” Sawyerr)
 - C. According to Sawyerr the African Concept of Family Embraces the Living, the Unborn and the Dead

Questions: Is the so-called African concept of the family identical with the New Testament idea of the church as

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household? Can appeal to tradition fully validate Sawyerr's claims?

IV. Implications of “Church as the Great Family” Ecclesiology

- A. Ancestors Are Included into the Church
- B. Ancestors Are Incorporated into the “Communion of the Saints”
- C. The Church Becomes an Extension of the Kinship and Blood Line
- D. “Prayers of African Christians Might Lead to the Salvation of their Pagan Ancestors” (H. Sawyerr)



Lecture XVII

PRAYER IN AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

I. Worship and Prayer are Related to Theology and Precede Theology

- A. “The worship and ministry of the local church may . . . be in practice the most powerful and consistent source in the shaping of . . . popular and preached theology in Africa” (A. Hastings)
- B. Oral Theology Comes before Written Theology in Africa: “Cattle are Born with Ears, their Horns Grow Later” (J. S. Mbiti)

II. Prayer Is Central to Religion and Must Be Taken into Account in Attempts to Contextualize Theology

- A. Right Theology Begins, Continues and Ends with Right Prayer
- B. Prayer Is the Mother of Theology

III. Structure and Emphases of Prayer in African Traditional Religions

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- A. Social and Religious Background of Prayer in Africa
- B. Prayer: A Drama with Three Actors: God, Man and the Adversary
 - 1. Prayers are petitions to God for help against one's enemies
 - 2. God is man's natural ally
 - 3. Model African prayer: "Deliver me from material ills and replace them with abundant things"
 - 4. Prayer is efficacious and guarantees that God will grant petitions
 - 5. African prayer is communal

IV. Lessons and Implications for Christian Praying in Africa

- A. African Christians Have Prayers for All Occasions (as in Traditional Religions)
- B. Community Prayer is Important: Worship and Prayer Should not Be Separated



Lecture XVIII

ESCHATOLOGY IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY

- I. Introduction: African Concept of Time and Eschatology as Mbiti's Contribution
- II. Mbiti's Idea of African Concept of Time
 - A. African Concept of Time Is Related to African Anthropocentrism
 - B. For the African Time is a Sequence of Events which Have Occurred, or Are Taking Place Now or About to Occur in the Immediate Future. What Has not Taken Place or Will not Occur within a very Short Time Belongs to the Category "No Time"
 - C. For Africans Time is Two-Dimensional: a Long Past, a Present, but Practically no Future

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- D. The Western Linear Concept of Time Is Almost Unknown in Africa
- E. For Africans Time Moves Backward and not Forward
- F. Time Must Be Experienced to Have Meaning or Reality

III. Evaluation of Mbiti's African Concept of Time

- A. The Adjective "African" Is too Broad in Mbiti's Description: What Is True in one Instance Does not Apply across Africa in General
- B. Time Moves Forward to Africans also; Ancestral Veneration Does not Mean that Time Moves Backward
- C. African Societies Do Have a Concept of the Future

IV. Implications of "African Concept of Time" for Eschatology

- A. There is no Future Coming of Christ
- B. Eschatology is Christological



Lecture XIX

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND THE QUESTION OF SYNCRETISM

- I. Introduction: The Question is Often Asked: "Can There Be an African Theology That Is not Syncretistic?"
- II. General Reflections on Syncretism
 - A. Syncretism Is One of the Major Challenges to Authentic Christianity Worldwide
 - B. Syncretism Seems to Be Growing in Spite of Christians' Awareness of it

III. Nature of Syncretism

Lecture Outlines

- A. For Comparative Religionists, Syncretism Is a Fusion, a Mixing of Various Religions in Doctrine
- B. Syncretism Is Largely an Unconscious Tendency to Adjust to Various Religious Phenomena
- C. Syncretism Is due to Inadequate Religion or a Process of Political Rearrangement
- D. For Missiologists and Christian Theologians, Syncretism Is Nominal Christianity, Christopaganism or Cultism
- E. Syncretism Is a Mixture of at Least Two Religions; It Is a Hybrid Reality Which Satisfies Neither the Christian nor the Non-Christian



IV. Manifestations of Syncretism

- A. Syncretism Takes Many Forms, Depending on the Context in Which it Occurs
- B. Are African Independent Churches Particularly Prone to Produce Syncretism?
- C. Syncretism Is also Present in African Evangelical Churches
- D. Syncretism Appears in Three Forms: (R. Schreiter)
 1. Christianity and another tradition are mixed, the second tradition providing the basic framework of the new reality
 2. Christianity (substantially and independently reinterpreted and reshaped) provides the basic framework of the hybrid reality
 3. Selected elements of Christianity are incorporated into another religious system

V. How Can Syncretism be Remedied?

- A. Begin with the Recognition that Syncretism Shows the Incompleteness of the Success of Gospel Communication
- B. Make an Exact Historical Analysis of the Specific Form of Syncretism

Lecture Outlines

- C. Find Ways of Dealing with People's Needs with Sound Christian Theology
- D. Syncretism Can Only be Eradicated with Solid Biblical and Theological Teaching



Lecture XX

THE CONTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES TO AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

- I. Introduction: African Independent Churches in Missiological Literature**
- II. The Question of Nomenclature**
 - A. African Independent Churches or African Initiated Churches?
 - B. AICs Are Churches Developed and Established by Africans for the Purpose of Dealing with African Concerns in Christianity
- III. Variety and Types of African Independent Churches**
 - A. Nativistic Churches: Founded by Africans
 - B. Separatist or Secessionist Churches (Separated from Mission or Established Churches)
 - C. Syncretistic Churches: Churches Founded and Directed by a Prophet or Prophetess
 - D. Messianic Churches: Churches Waiting for the Coming of the Messiah for Africans
 - E. Millennialist Churches: Churches Waiting for a Millennial Period where White People no Longer Dominate; Instead Black People with Reign
 - F. African Liberationist Churches: Churches Born out of Protest against Oppression and Foreign Domination

Lecture Outlines

Essentially, African Independent Churches are reactions to some of the excesses of Western Christianity

IV. African Origins of Independent Churches

- A. General Opinion: Africans Are the Sole Initiators of African Independent Churches
- B. The African American Factor in African Independent Churches (L. Sanneh)

V. Theology of African Independent Churches

Note: The following provides an illustration from *Aladura* Churches

- A. Belief in the Co-Existence of God and Other Spiritual Beings
- B. God Punishes Sinners with Disease and Misfortune and Rewards the Virtuous with Health and Success
- C. Emphasis on Healing and Other Spectacular Works of the Holy Spirit
- D. Spiritual Power Is Acquired through Prayer: Prayer Is the Mother of Other Blessings and Gifts

VI. Theological Challenges of Independent Churches

- A. Independent Churches Force Global Christianity to Take Non-Western Christian Realities Seriously
- B. Independent Churches Raise the Question of the Inter-Cultural Nature of Theology
- C. Independent Churches Call us to Search for Practical Ways of Developing Inter-Cultural Theology



Lecture Outlines

Lecture XXI

EVANGELICALISM AND AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY



- I. **Introduction: Contrary to Some Opinions, African Evangelicals Are not against Expressing Christianity with an African Idiom. Nevertheless, Evangelicals in Africa Tend to Suffer from Theological Anemia**
- II. **Evangelical Initiatives in African Christian Theology**
 - A. The Role of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (Note: *This organization changed its name at its General Assembly held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1993. The new name is The Association of Evangelicals of Africa, AEA*)
 1. Before 1973: Period of evangelical individualism, fragmentation and little attention paid to theological concerns
 - a. Evangelicals focused on evangelization, local Bible schools and grassroots gospel ministry
 - b. The AEAM also established the Association of Evangelical Bible Institutes and Colleges of Africa and Madagascar (AEBICAM)
 - c. AEBICAM helped promote Theological Education by Extension (TEE)
 2. After 1973: The AEAM established a Christian Education Commission, and created a Theological Commission
 - a. The Theological Commission replaced the AEBICAM
 - b. A major goal of the AEAM Theological Commission was to help establish graduate level theological institutions in Africa as soon as possible
 - B. Byang H. Kato: Leader in Developing and Implementing an Evangelical Theological Strategy for the AEAM

Lecture Outlines

- C. The Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA): A Catalyst for Excellence in Theological Education



Lecture XXII

AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY AND THE CRITICS

- I. **Introduction: Focus of the Lecture: Criticism of Non-Christian Africans against Attempts at Africanizing Christianity and Theology**
- II. **For the African Critics the Christian Interpretation of African Religious Traditions Is Irrelevant or Misguided. They Claim that Christianity is Western and Alien to Africa**
- III. **Critics Attack Christianity Because, in their Estimation, it Promotes the Cultural and Religious Alienation of Africans**

Western civilization vs. indigenous forces: The most important cultural conflict in Africa (A. Mazrui)

- IV. **The Way for African Christianity: Neither Westernization nor Indigenous Authenticity**

Lecture XXIII

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND POST-INDEPENDENCE AFRICA

- I. **Introduction: How Should Christian Theologizing be Done in Post-Colonial Africa?**
- II. **Assessment of the Current Situation of African Theology**
 - A. **After Two Hundred Years of Continuous Christian Presence in Africa, the Church Has not Been Able to Relate the Gospel Message to the Political, Social and Cultural Milieu of the African People (E. Onwura)**

Lecture Outlines

- B. African Theologians Tend to Dwell Exclusively on African Cultural Heritage in their Attempts at Producing African Theologies. They do not Deal with the Post-Colonial Situation (B. Bujo)

III. Christian Scholarship and the Present African Context

- A. Christian Scholars Must Provide Serious Reflection on the Current African Crisis
- B. African Christian Scholars Depend on Ready-Made Thought (A. Mbembe)
- C. Christian Scholarship Is Necessary for Comprehensive Discipleship and Witness

IV. Obstacles to Christian Scholarship

- A. Borrowed Agenda
- B. Limited Scope
- C. Utilitarian Mentality
- D. Dichotomy of Heart and Mind



Lecture XXIV

THEOLOGY OF MISSION IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

- I. Introduction: Theology of Mission Has Received Little Attention in African Christian Theologizing. Yet, “Mission Is the Mother of Theology.” (M. Kähler)
- II. Growth and Vitality of Christianity in Africa Establishes the Necessity of Developing a Theology of Mission
- III. Characteristics of a Theology of Mission Arising out of Africa

Lecture Outlines

- A. An African Theology of Mission Must Deal with the Need to Consolidate the Gains of Past Christian Missionizing
- B. An African Theology of Mission Must Provide Ways of Liberating African Christians from Complexes Associated with Questions of African Identity so as to Enable Africans to Participate Fully in the Mission of the Crucified and Risen Lord
- C. An African Theology of Mission Must Articulate Reasons for the Continued Expansion of the Christian Faith
- D. An African Theology of Mission Must Establish a Theological Basis for Dealing with the Socio-Economic and Political Crises of the Continent





Study Questions

Lecture I

1. Why has Africa been described as Christianity's most fertile soil?
2. What, according to Ali Mazrui, are the six paradoxes of the African condition? How do they relate to his call to "reaffricanize" Africa?
3. Do you agree with the statement: "The future of the Christian faith lies in Africa" Why, or why not?
4. What are the three major geographical/cultural divisions of Africa? What challenges does each present for Christian ministry?

Lecture II

1. Reflect briefly on the seven opinions regarding the status of Christianity in Africa.
2. What are the three phases of the planting of Christianity in Africa?
3. What were the centers of Early African Christianity? Which ones survived until today? Why?
4. What lessons can we learn from Early African Christianity?

Lecture III

1. Write a brief reflective comment on this statement from Kwame Bediako: "Modern African theology emerges as a theology of African Christian identity."
2. Why is the quest for identity important for contemporary Africans?
3. What did Placide Tempels seek to prove in his *Bantu Philosophy*?
4. How are the search for African theology and the quest for African identity related?

Lecture IV

1. What are the terms that have been used to describe African religions? Are they adequate or inadequate? Why?
2. How can we best state specificity in the study of African religions?



Study Questions

3. How has the anthropological approach distorted the study of African religions?
4. Evaluate the positions of Idowu and Mbiti regarding African religions. Do you agree with either one of them? Why?

Lecture V

1. What, according to the lecturer, is a major handicap for the study of the structure of African religions?
2. What are the two main characteristics of African worldview assumptions?
3. Why are mediation and harmony chief concerns of African religions?
4. How has modernity affected the structure of African religions?

Lecture VI

1. What are the implications of an anthropocentric worldview for concepts of God in Africa?
2. Are African religions best described as polytheistic or monotheistic? Why?
3. In what ways do African ideas of creation and governance affect their understanding of theism?
4. In your opinion, has the Africans' understanding of theism prepared them to accept the Christian gospel easily?

Lecture VII

1. "We are, therefore I am." How does this understanding of man-in-community relate to your idea of biblical anthropology?
2. How does the African concept of sin affect the understanding of human destiny?
3. Briefly sketch the Christian doctrines of heaven and hell against the background of the African concept of salvation.

Lecture VIII

1. What are the key issues involved in the relationship between Christianity and culture?



Study Questions

2. Explain the opinions of Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria regarding the relationship of gospel and culture.
3. What is the meaning of the statement: “The gospel is the prisoner and liberator of culture” (A. F. Walls)?
4. Why do some scholars consider dialogue with African traditional religions a central aspect of inculturation theology in Africa?

Lecture IX

1. In what ways can Agbebi and Hughes be called precursors of African theology?
2. Explain Kato’s statement: “Let *African* Christians be *Christian* Africans.”
3. Comment on the relevance of Hughes’ thought for contemporary missiological issues in Africa.

Lecture X

1. In what way is the present debate on African theology still marked by the context of its birth?
2. The first generation of modern African theologians produced theologies of antithesis. What were the reasons for this reality?
3. Describe the reasons for the importance of the 1950s for African theology.
4. How can the debate on African theology move forward?

Lecture XI

1. What are the definitions generally given to the expression “African theology”? Why have these attempts at definition created confusion?
2. What should be the characteristics of African Christian theology?
3. What challenges does African theology raise for evangelicals?
4. Reflect on the following question: “Should we Christianize Africa or Africanize Christianity?”



Study Questions

Lecture XII

1. According to E. Kodjo, “Africa produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.” How does this statement apply to methodological issues in African theology?
2. Nyamiti proposes a redefinition of theology as a beginning point for discussion on methodology. Do you agree with his concerns? Why or why not?
3. What external “sciences” have proponents of African theology generally used? How has this practice hindered the development of genuine African theology?
4. How can the Schreiter-Tiénou three-fold methodology provide a way forward in methodology for African theology?

Lecture XIII

1. Why are questions concerning the nature of the Bible important for proper hermeneutics?
2. What are the implications of the statement, “The Bible is both oral and written literature,” for hermeneutics?
3. Compare and contrast Thiselton’s two-horizon hermeneutics with traditional hermeneutics.
4. Define “hermeneutics of remembrance” and show why some proponents of African theology have adopted it.

Lecture XIV

1. What are the similarities and differences between African inculturation theology and South African Black theology?
2. How does poverty in Africa contribute to the rise of African liberation theology?
3. Given the themes of culture, color and poverty in African theology, do you agree with Kato’s concerns to broaden the discussion? Why or not?

Lecture XV

1. From your knowledge of African religions and cultures, why would African contributions to Christology emphasize His role as Master of Initiation, Healer and Ancestor?



Study Questions

2. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the three Christologies (see above).
3. Explain the Christological paradigm of Jesus as Guest and compare it to the more “conventional” African Christologies.

Lecture XVI

1. For what reasons has there been little attention devoted to ecclesiology in African theology?
2. What factors in African societies explain the choice of the “Great Family” as a basis for an African ecclesiology?
3. According to Sawyerr, what are the components of the African family?
4. In what ways does the family-based ecclesiology of Sawyerr and others promote universalism?

Lecture XVII

1. Explain the statement: “Prayer is the mother of theology.”
2. What are the main emphases and characteristics of prayer in African traditional religions?
3. How does understanding the structure and emphases of prayer in African religions help us analyze the way Christians pray in Africa?
4. What lessons can other people learn from the prayer habits of Africans?

Lecture XVIII

1. According to Mbiti, what are the main characteristics of the African concept of time?
2. How has Mbiti’s idea of the African concept of time been evaluated?
3. What are the implications of “the African concept of time” for eschatology?

Lecture XIX

1. Why is syncretism one of the major challenges to authentic Christianity in the world today?
2. What three forms does syncretism usually take?



Study Questions

3. How is syncretism manifested in African Christianity?
4. How can syncretism be eradicated?

Lecture XX

1. Describe the different types of African independent churches.
2. Explain what is meant by “the African American Factor” in African independent churches.
3. Evaluate the theological traits of the *Aladura* churches.
4. What theological challenges do independent churches raise for global Christianity?

Lecture XXI

1. Was Kato right in his opinion that African evangelicals suffer from theological anemia?
2. How would you characterize evangelical theological initiatives in Africa prior to 1973?
3. What makes 1973 an important year for evangelical theological development in Africa?
4. Evaluate Kato’s theological legacy.

Lecture XXII

1. What kinds of criticisms have African non-Christian intellectuals expressed against Christianity in Africa?
2. Are African Christians the Trojan horses of Westernization in the continent?
3. Should African Christians choose between Westernization and indigenous authenticity? Why or why not?

Lecture XXIII

1. Have African Christian scholars dealt adequately with the post-colonial situation? Why?
2. Explain A. Mbembe’s criticism of the intellectual life of African clergy.



Study Questions

3. What are the obstacles to Christian scholarship in Africa?

Lecture XXIV

1. Explain the statement: “Mission is the mother of theology.”
2. Why should African Christian theologians produce a theology mission?
3. What characteristics should an African theology of mission have?



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