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CHALLENGES TO AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

An AJET Editorial

Africa is a land of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, starvation and disease. In its cities there is an unemployment, overcrowding and fragmentation of families. This fragmentation of life is greatly reinforced by globalization and religious pluralism. However, these cities are vibrating with opportunities for the gospel. People in the city need to be loved and touched. The primary source of identity for urban people is their jobs. The church needs to be relevant to the problems of life in the city and expose the realities of African urbanization. Both the city and the rural areas must have its biblical place in our theologies.

The whole church needs to seize this opportunity because it might be short lived. Strong churches are needed that herald the truth and not compromise with the essentials of the Word of God. There is need for theologians and Bible expositors who are men and women of character and integrity as well as deeply rooted in biblical truth. Time is long past for the few African theologians to quarrel over words. They should get to the issues and grapple with them. Not only should the church deal with day-to-day problems but also biblical doctrines.

The African church has received a worldwide reputation as far as numerical growth is concerned. Statements like,

- "The largest churches in the world will be in Africa south of the Sahara,"
- "The fastest growing church is in Africa,"
- "The numerical centre has shifted from North to South,"
- "60-70% of world's Christianity is in the two-thirds world,"

and so forth, could easily make the church complacent.

As noted by one of the contributors, African Christianity should be aware that the centre of gravity still remains a Western and Northern phenomenon. Europe and North America still determine the theological

agenda for the church in Africa (Samuel Olarewaju). In addition, "for decades the image the world has had of the African Church is that of a fat baby, growing fatter every day but never growing up! A baby forever on milk, not on solid food, which is prepared in Africa and fit for international consumption" (Yemi Ladipo, AJET 1989). The spiritual depth and commitment on the part of the believers is still wanting. The following problems are still evident: lack of pastoral concern on the part of church leadership; lack of financial accountability; lack of emphasis on discipleship and training of holistic lifestyle; lack of discipline in attitude to work; lack of love among brethren; lack of biblical teaching on tithing, lack of trained leadership, and lack of theological depth.

Lack of theological training makes the church prone to heresies. The church is called upon to contextualize and grapple with issues of importance. Theology must maintain its distinctiveness in the midst of what is taking place in the world. The Northerners and Southerners need to combine their efforts. The work of missions demands all of our efforts. We must enter into the world of the lost both in the cities and rural areas. We need a whole generation of young people who have a passion for God and a heart for the lost world.