

## ***Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ***

“Comments after reading this book”<sup>1</sup>

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23-24 April, 1988

The book provides very interesting insight into the way missionaries have co-operated with the colonial powers (and vice versa), while seeming not to see the other side of the coin, i.e. the fact that colonialism was exploitative in nature. There are some parallels (which the book does not draw out) with the official position of the Christian Reformed Church in S. Africa, namely that God has given the civilized Christian white race rulership over the pagan black tribes until they can be led into full maturity in Christ, fit to manage their own affairs. This seems to have been the dominant philosophy among missionaries to Nigeria, if this book is correct.

The book suffers from problems of typesetting, spelling etc. which is understandable since it was produced in Nigeria, but it also is written in a style which I find hard to read because it is both heavily academic, and grammatically poor in many places. Again this is understandable since English is not the author's first language. However, if the aim is to make the biggest possible impact for the author's ideas, it would be a good idea to get the next book “ghost re-written” by a good editor before going to press.

Specific pages which I marked on first reading for later comment include:

p. 153 – The author agrees with Calvin that human reason is totally corrupted. This raises the question of why we have, for example, Regent College, or indeed the Free University of Amsterdam which published the master version of this work. Why not be like the more extreme elements of the charismatic movement and do everything entirely by “revelation”? I accept that Scripture can only be truly understood when the Holy Spirit illuminates its meaning, *but* I believe that the truth I then see in it conforms to reason, it's just that formerly I was blind to

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1 A hand-written review, 24 April/1988 (4 pp.).

it. Put another way, I believe uncorrupted reason could exist – it's just that no human being has had it, since the fall. I think that puts me at odds with Calvin and the author.

p. 154-5 - Re the Old Testament Law, I see we have to fight not only a dualism between sacred and secular but also between eternal values and local, private or cultic values. If we lose *this* battle we become liberal Christians and have no truth at all to offer!

p. 170 – The quotation from Romans 14:19-21 appears to be wrenched out of context to feed the author's current argument at this point.

p. 170 – In the quotation from Ephesians 4 & I Peter, what does the author understand to be the "body"?

p. 170 – The quotation "seek first the Kingdom of God" needs much explanation. What is the Kingdom of God? For example, Pat Robertson has written a book on "Secret Principles of the Kingdom" which suggests personal success comes from following these rules. So his understanding of "seek first the Kingdom" seems opposite to the author's, in this context.

p. 176 – Compare the liberation theology which advocates earthly solutions, and the apparent thrust of the latter part of the author's work which seems to also advocate earthy solutions to the *current* practice among some Pentecostal groups in Australia who believe the solution to *earthy* problems lies in *heaven*. They publish a newspaper *naming* corrupt officials in government and those who advocate ungodly policies, and they then gather to pray that God will deal with such people and thus rescue their land. They appear to have had some successes in "praying down" corrupt officials.

p. 177 – The author states that the lower classes have deserted the church in Britain. My experience there was just the opposite: the working-class believers have gone into the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches where they find the Power of God is not limited by the social respectability requirements of the middle classes. Whereas the middle-class evangelicals have grown cold towards the Lord or have retreated from the front lines of witnessing.

It is now 6 months since I read the book, but this is the first chance I've had to transcribe my notes. Don't press me to defend what I've written unless you are prepared to wait until I find time to re-read the book, because my notes are old and I honestly can't always connect what I thought at the time I read the book, with what it seems to say at a quick glance today.

P.S. I think there is a lot of potential for confusion in the author's use of the term "full gospel" to mean "salvation gospel plus political activism". We have a large Pentecostal denomination named "Full Gospel" (also "Four Square Gospel") which uses the term to denote "Salvation gospel plus fullness of the Holy Spirit".

Also see my attached comments about forms of government.

### *Comments re forms of government*

Having lived under British Colonial Rule in Zambia, South African partial democracy, Canadian centralism, and Polish Communism, I've come to the conclusion that *any* of the systems of government in this world would work properly *if* the people were all unselfish (i.e. truly born again & trusting God). So the political issue for Christians is, what form of government works best for unrepentant sinners? Put this way, we can give up in despair or we can look at examples around the world. Judged on that basis, N. American society doesn't come off too badly; it would work better if the Christians played their part as infiltrators from the Kingdom of God, instead of doing their best to become part of the society round them.

I feel that the book *Missions – Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* shows the author to have an underlying hope that somehow a society can be built here on earth that is truly Christian. I feel this is a vain hope, considering what happened to Jesus Christ himself! I think the proper example to follow is the unregistered church of the Soviet Union, who remain faithful to Christ at great personal cost and hence have great spiritual power. Canada and the USA are getting more like the Soviet Union every day. Just last week I read about a pro-life woman in Florida who made a symbolic act against an abortion clinic (unplugged a suction machine

while TV crews filmed her) and was sentenced to 5 years ... she was strip searched in full view of male guards every time she received a visitor, was denied her constitutional right of access to her lawyer, and denied medication needed for an eye socket (she had lost the eye to cancer) as she got ulcers in the socket. This happened in Florida! And we know of excellent, well qualified nurses who cannot get a permanent job here in BC because they will not participate in abortions (which, by the way, as a result of the Supreme Court overturning our only abortion law, are now legal right up to the time of birth in Canada!). So we will soon be sharing the plight of our Soviet brothers and sisters – that will weed out the fringe Christians pretty quickly!

In summary, while I do not accept a dualism between spiritual and earthly realms, I do believe the *answers* to earthly problems should always be sought in the *spiritual* realm. If most of the people in a society (or even a significant minority) are truly Christians who act Christianly, the society will work well no matter what its official form is (dictatorship, democracy, etc.).