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2. THE CRYING NEED FOR A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY IN AFRICA¹

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It is a special privilege to participate in this international symposium commemorating the Christian philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd's (1894-1977) centenary, because apart from D.H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) this father of the Reformational philosophy made an immeasurable contribution to the development of Christian-Reformational thought in my fatherland.

I am especially grateful that the organizers offered me an opportunity within this working group (different from the other working groups specializing in systematic-philosophical topics) to share with you something about Christian philosophy in Africa - regarded by many as a dying, even totally lost continent. If one keeps in mind what has been happening in just one African country, viz. Rwanda, in the course of the past few months, it is difficult not to succumb to Afro-pessimism, as so many are doing. I therefore trust that I will be able to benefit from your reactions, insights and experiences as Christian philosophers from elsewhere in the world, so that we as Africans can continue with

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worldview, and most definitely not an outspokenly Reformational Christian worldview. The important question, then, is how this interest in worldview can be stimulated in order to develop in the direction of a clear African Reformational worldview in order, eventually, to become a fully-fledged African Christian-Reformational philosophy.

I am therefore not going to talk to you (as requested by the organizers of this symposium) about the *status* of Christian-Reformational philosophy in Africa, or about the *position* of this philosophy in South Africa. (The situation in South Africa will only be brought into discussion to the extent that it is relevant for the rest of Africa.) I am going to talk about the *crying need* for a Christian worldview and a Christian philosophy in Africa outside South Africa.

When, about 70 years ago, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd began to give shape to their Christian philosophy, they at least had a tradition (including, among others, Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper and Bavinck) from whom they could derive inspiration. In Africa we are, in a real sense, less well endowed. Christian tertiary institutions (mostly Bible and Theological Schools) are not interested in a Christian philosophy, or do not see its importance. The about 30 philosophy departments on the continent mostly teach secular Western philosophy.

Christ Himself, in his parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), however, teaches us that all work in his kingdom begins very modestly. I am therefore asking your attention to the great task awaiting us. I will do this under three main points, (1) the *problem*, (2) the *potential*, and (3) a *plan* of action. In typical philosophical fashion I will spend most time on the first one, the problem!

2. THE PROBLEM

Conditions at the almost 100 state universities in Africa are terrible. In the Foreword to W.S. Saint's book *Universities in Africa; strategies for stabilization and revitalization* (1992) one reads that "The universities in Africa are in crisis. Enrolments rise as capacities for government support decline. Talented staff are abandoning the campuses, libraries are out-dated, research output is dropping, students are protesting overcrowded and inhospitable conditions, and educational quality is deteriorating. The need for action is urgent ... Without academically

and financially viable universities, Africa's future will be forfeit" (p. vii). From this shocking publication it emerges that the main problems are *quality, relevance, finances, efficiency, equity and governance*. (Amongst all of them the *lack of relevance* is perhaps the most serious problem.) The governments of the different African states played a decisive role in this decline of the universities on the continent.

Add to this that in practically all (about thirty) philosophy departments on the continent secular Western philosophy is accepted and taught - a fact clearly to be seen, for example, from the papers delivered at the World Conference of Philosophy of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, organized in Nairobi, Kenya from July 21-25, 1991 by *inter alia* the Philosophical Association of Kenya and supported by the Afro-Asian Philosophy Association and the Inter-African Council of Philosophy.

The most important problem, however, is that Christianity in Africa itself does not at the moment realize the necessity of a Christian philosophy. Should we want Christian *philosophy* to become rooted and to grow here, the foundation of a Christian *worldview* will first have to be laid. (I regard a worldview as something prescientific and philosophy as the scientific/scholarly study and promotion of a worldview.)

A Christian worldview cannot be established, however, should one not be *au fait* with the spiritual climate in the Africa of today. In its turn this demands insight into what has been happening on the African continent during this past century. (A very important question at the moment is whether, for example, in the case of ancestor-"worship", bush-schools, polygamy etc. Christianity should build upon, accommodate to or transform the traditional African worldviews.) A large part of the paper will therefore go towards outlining the present state of Christianity on the continent. The intention is to indicate what a crying need there is for a Christian worldview and eventually a Christian philosophy.

2.1 The crisis in the transformation of Africa and the urgent need for a Christian worldview and a Christian philosophy

We first discuss the colonial period (about 1880-1960) and then the post-colonial period (about 1960 and thereafter).

2.1.1 The colonial phase

The traditional, pre-colonial African was not a person without a culture concentrated in a definite religion and worldview. This is what - believe it or not - many Western colonialists thought. No, their traditional worldview was holistic, all-embracing, it integrated the entirety of their lives and gave it clear direction. They did not experience any "identity crisis".

The following, however, is what happened in the process of "Christianization" and "modernization" during the colonial period. (This process was also characterized by the three c's: Christianity, commerce and civilization.) The introduction of Christianity, as well as of a Western education and Western political and economic institutions, exerted a profound influence upon African cultural values and structures.

For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that contact between Africa and the rest of the world did not for the first time commence round about 1880. North Africa, bordering the Mediterranean, had intensive contact with Europe already during the first centuries and trade and other links were established between the Western world and West Africa, eg. Ghana from the 12th century! For more than four centuries (1450-1880) Arabs and Europeans had explored and exploited the continent. Africa was not only robbed of valuables like ivory and gold, but also of millions of its people. It is estimated that a minimum of ten million slaves ended up in the Americas, the Atlantic islands and in Europe. An average of 20% were, however, killed during the capture operations or died from the time of capture and during the voyage. The resultant figure could be many times larger than the numbers which landed alive outside Africa. Some writers estimate the total at about 100 million. We will, however, focus our attention on the period lasting from about the end

of the previous century up to the liberation and independence of most of the African countries during the sixties of the twentieth century.

During this phase, when Africa was still divided into separate colonies belonging to the large Western powers, the traditional way of life came under increasing pressure. For the sake of "modernization", Western worldviews and values, which were often in direct conflict with the traditional African values, were forced onto the continent's inhabitants.

The colonizers did not trouble to hide their Western sense of superiority. The African worldview was considered childish and therefore had to be "corrected" and brought to the same level as that of the West. Europe and North America regarded Africa as the symbol of barbarism and non-civilization. They regarded the worldview of the African as primitive, pre-logical and without intelligence.

The strategy which the Western powers and missionaries therefore applied was the negation of indigenous African culture and its replacement by the so-called superior Western culture. Let us first have a brief look at colonial administration and then discuss in more detail the role of Christian missions. (Time will not allow us to discuss separately the already mentioned important role which commerce played in this regard.)

The role of colonial administration

The above-mentioned strategy of negation and replacement of African culture in some cases resulted in facets of traditional culture being ignored or even wiped out, but in most cases traditional African culture was modified or transformed by the Western influence, sometimes resulting in totally new cultural phenomena and institutions.

Examples of social structures *imported* more or less wholesale from Europe are (apart from the church, which will be discussed under the next section on Christian missions), schools, universities and Western forms of government (with, *inter alia*, elected leaders and bureaucracies). These social institutions having migrated from afar were regarded as an "improvement" by the Western rulers, but for the local people they were very much of a "mixed blessing".

Because of Western colonial rule pre-colonial institutions were also *transformed*. An example here could be the influence of the Western idea of a nuclear family (the family consisting only of father, mother and children) on the traditional African idea of a much more extended family setup.

But apart from importations and modifications the encounter between traditional African culture and Western colonial administration also resulted in *totally new creations* - institutions and phenomena which had previously existed in neither Africa nor the West. Examples are, for instance, urbanization and ideologies like African socialism.

The role of Christian missions

There were three major phases in Christian contact with Africa. The first one was between the first and the sixth centuries, mainly confined to North Africa, which was finally overrun by Islam in the seventh century. The second was the Portuguese missions between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries, but this influence was limited to the coastline of Africa, the Congo, Angola, Mozambique and East Africa. The third phase brings us back to the modern European missions that came to Africa during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. It is the work of the Christian missionaries during this period that is of special importance to us.

Before we start criticising the work of Christian missions in Africa, let me state categorically that this critique in no way suggests that the Christianity brought to Africa was useless. In spite of certain failures, Christianity did make immense contributions to our continent. The thousands of churches, schools and hospitals established by the missions are living proof of that.

When we will be criticising (see below) Western missionaries for not being sensitive enough towards traditional African cultures, we should keep in mind that the Gospel is never proclaimed without its cultural "clothing", whether in the West, Africa, Asia or Latin America. What therefore occurred on the African continent was inevitable because of the Western way of understanding the Gospel as well as the Western training of the missionaries. Western people today are not much better:

they still impose Western ideas about economy, agriculture and development on Africa!

In the first place we will look at the way in which Christianity was introduced into Africa, and secondly at the *type* of Christianity that was transplanted to our continent. We do hope that it will become clear that it was not only Western colonial rule which disturbed the earlier, pre-colonial culture and worldview of the peoples of Africa. The gun was accompanied by the cross! Unfortunately the way in which the Christian faith was presented and the role of the dualist *type* of Christianity which was introduced into Africa, not only presented Africa with the Gospel, but also caused a real crisis for Africa.

The way in which Christianity was introduced

Christianity - or any other religion - never exists in a cultural vacuum. One experiences one's religion in and not outside one's own culture. The Gospel transmitted by the missionaries was coloured by Western culture and worldview, it was brought to Africa in Western clothes. Saul's panoply, was for David, only an impediment, in part comical, in part ominous - inviting problems.

Someone has used the example of the Gospel flower in the flower pot. The flower pot symbolizes the cultural values of the missionary. The flower, that is, the Gospel, should not stay in the Western pot and thus be confused with "real Christianity", but should as soon as possible be transplanted into African soil.

The recipients were/are traditional Africans, who grew up in a totally different cultural environment. Their perception and interpretation of the Gospel were therefore determined by their own worldview.

The problem was, however, that neither the missionaries nor the recipients of their message were aware, or at least aware enough, of the difference between the Gospel and its cultural "clothes". The result was that the missionaries viewed the cultural form in which they presented the Gospel as a real part of the Gospel. And the Africans thought that they should accept Western cultural forms to enable them to be genuine Christians!

The situation was aggravated by the fact that the Western missionaries - like the colonial rulers - regarded not only Christianity, but also their own culture, as being superior to the cultures of the indigenous people of Africa. Many Western missionaries of the last century did not realize how deeply the Gospel they brought to Africa was contaminated by secular Western culture. They definitely had no grounds for regarding their culture as superior, as the criterion according to which African culture should be measured.

Apart from Christianity ignoring their own cultural environment, the Africans also got the impression that Christianity was something *separate* from ordinary life. (This idea was strengthened by the dualist type of Christianity which will soon be discussed.)

What happened in most cases, however, was that the outer, more visible layers of traditional African culture were exchanged in favour of the outer layers (habits, behaviour, customs, institutions and values) of Western culture. The inner core of traditional culture (its worldview and religious convictions), however, remained more or less intact. These outer and more visible cultural layers tend to change more easily and faster. However, culture as a whole (from its inner religious and worldview core to its outer layers) constitutes a unity. It cannot be a mixture containing foreign elements. A traditional African core (religion and worldview) with a Westernised rest (values, material and spiritual creations, customs, etc.) inevitably cause internal tension. An identity crisis will be the result: Am I (still) an African, (already) a Westerner or (only) a Christian or perhaps all of them in one?

To summarize: the crisis of African Christianity is basically a worldview crisis. (This can be clearly seen in the difference between urban and rural life on the continent today.) And what is the basic reason for this? The reason is that most Western missionaries - and also some Africans who embraced Christianity - did not take the worldview and the religion of the African people seriously, because they regarded it as ridiculous, primitive superstition. If they took it seriously, they reasoned, it would weaken the Gospel. But it is precisely because they did not take it seriously that the impact of Christianity on the African was weakened.

Because the Gospel was not brought as a new, total, encompassing worldview, which had to take the place of an equally encompassing traditional worldview, the deepest core of African culture remained untouched. Christian faith only influenced and changed the outer layers of African culture such as, for example, customs and behaviour. For this reason it often led to superficial Christianity - totally at variance with the nature of the Christian faith, which is a total, all-embracing religion, influencing the whole of life from a reborn heart - in the same way that a heart pumps life-giving blood to every part of the body.

The average African convert did not experience the Gospel as adequate for his whole life, and especially not when it came to the most complex issues of life. For that reason we find all over Africa today that Christians, in times of existential need and crisis, as in danger, illness and death, revert to their traditional faith and worldview. The Gospel thus has no lasting impact in those areas where it really matters.

The result is that many Christians in Africa live in two worlds: the older or traditional one, and the new or the Christian one. They try to straddle both positions. This can only lead to frustration and uncertainty, especially for the African, who has traditionally functioned within a holistic, integral religion and worldview.

Because a worldview determines personal identity, a crisis in one's worldview also implies an identity crisis. One has difficulty finding oneself! One does not know where to look for solutions to one's problems, be they of a physical, psychological, ethical, social or whatever nature.

Not only was the way Christianity was introduced to Africa detrimental, the *type* of Christianity imported to this continent also aggravated the situation.

The type of Christianity introduced to Africa

The Biblical message is that the whole of life is religion. The religious direction of the heart of man (positive in obedience to God, or negative in disobedience away from God, directed toward a series of idols) determines his *whole* life, *everything* that he does or says. The *whole* of life (not only prayer, reading the Bible and going to church) is

religion, service of God, or, obversely, idolatry. The Gospel is not only something spiritual (for Sundays only), but it is a *full*, complete Gospel. It touches the fields of labour, commerce, political and social relations - everything that man does. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has power to change and renew the whole of life. *Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole of life.*

This true Biblical vision of life was only briefly - if at all - given shape by Christians. Already early in the history of Western Christendom, religion came to be seen as an addendum, a plus factor, additional to the ordinary secular concerns of life. It was not the whole of life that was spiritual or religious, but only the "upper part". This upper part of man's existence was called the sacred or holy part, over against the lower or secular part, which would then include such things as science, economics, politics, commerce, labour, social life, etc. The all-embracing word for the lower sphere was "nature", as against the higher "supernatural" part, the sphere of grace.

This vision of man and his task in the world can not be considered radical, total and integral. Man's religious life (which should be all-encompassing) is now limited to things such as praying, reading the Bible, going to church and doing theology - the so-called spiritual things - and perhaps also leading a good moral life. Religion, instead of being all-encompassing service to God, becomes a private issue that no longer has an influence on the social, political and economic spheres. It is clear, however, that this view of spiritual matters is something totally different from the Biblical perspective, which sees the whole of life as spiritual, that is, determined and directed by God or an idol.

The two-spheres doctrine is not simply *slightly* wrong. In essence it is *totally* unbiblical. This is clear *inter alia* from the fact that the Bible nowhere makes a distinction between nature and grace. The correct Biblical distinction is between grace and sin. The awful fact is that this incorrect view has been held by Christians for almost 2 000 years, and is still widely accepted. This means that we have a half-hearted, impotent Christendom, because the influence of the Gospel is reduced to a small part of life, for instance to Sundays, that is, to one-seventh of the week!

It was exactly this kind of pietist, world-negating Christianity that missionaries mostly brought to Africa.

Through following most Western churches, life in Africa is therefore divided into "spiritual" and "secular" spheres. There is a wide range of opinions concerning the relationship between these spheres, how they influence each other and which should enjoy preference. The more conservative Evangelicals of Africa allocate priority to the spiritual, the church and redemption. The "vertical" (the relationship to God) is the most important for them and all stress is therefore placed on evangelisation (the gaining of souls for Christ).

The Ecumenicals in Africa (the more liberal Christians), tend to think more "horizontally". Good relations between people at the natural level are more important and they therefore strive for a more humanitarian society.

The Evangelicals believe that new (reborn) people will gradually, through their individual testimony, change society with all its societal structures, such as state, industry and education. This view seems somewhat naïve, however, because the depth and breadth of human lostness are not seen. The tragic fact is that reborn Christians, even where they are the majority in a society, do not necessarily renew social structures, but have in fact in many countries perpetuated oppression. They narrow the Gospel down to its "vertical" dimensions - with at most some implications for the social involvement of individual Christians. They are very aggressive about "winning souls", but are mostly fairly passive when it comes to social renewal.

In contrast to this the Ecumenicals believe that evil is situated in the first place not in man but in his environment. For this reason the renewal of social structures and the overturning of the oppressive "establishments" will change the world. Reconciliation between people is more important than reconciliation with God. This view too is rather naïve because it is not always recognized that the Gospel should first of all call man out of the darkness of sin, out of a Godless life. The Gospel is often limited to its "horizontal" dimensions. Although these Christians are aggressive in social reform they are satisfied with a more or less passive Christian "presence" as a means to evangelisation.

Both these groups of Christians in Africa fail at the same point, viz. in their faulty (dualist) worldview. They simply put the stress at different poles. Neither of them truly realizes that Christ is the King of heaven and earth, soul and body, individual and society. The solution does not exist in *combining* the Evangelical and the Ecumenical visions. The dualistic worldview has to be *replaced* by the full Gospel of God's kingship in every sphere of life.

Secularism in Africa

People in African societies, who become modernized without obedience to the full Gospel, tend to become secular - as is the case in the West. This has already happened in many African countries with the absorption of secular Western ideologies, such as socialism, mixed with traditional African communalism or even more radical Marxism.

What remains once these ideologies begin to lose their popularity, as is happening now? We can already see clear examples of distinct secularism in which neither the traditional nor the Christian worldview plays any decisive role. In modern Africa we have authoritarianism or totalitarianism (not only the head of state, but also the civil servant wants to exercise power!), tribalism, nepotism, sectarianism and many more. What is causing the greatest havoc in contemporary Africa, is materialist individualism or for that matter individualist materialism.

One may wonder how this could be possible? It is possible exactly because the West did not provide Africans with an *integral, holistic* Christian worldview, but with a *dualist* Christian worldview. One is at the same time an ordinary human being who can do as one likes *and* a Christian who has to obey God's commands. Accordingly one may be a Christian at home and on Sundays, but during the week one may rob the government. However, there is nothing wrong with this provided one uses a small amount of one's assets to build a church!

A third possibility for Africa

The correct choice for African Christianity is, in fact, a return to the original Biblical worldview. Such a worldview is a prescientific attitude to life, which determines the spiritual direction of man's life.

It is thus not the product of science (theology or philosophy), but lies at the basis of man's scientific thought.

In this Biblical viewpoint the concept of the kingdom of God is central. This perspective includes three coherent ideas: God's *kingship*, the *sphere* of His dominion (creation), and the *fruits* (or blessings) of his sovereignty. It is therefore nothing less than the basic Christian confession that Christ is King and that we have to recognise and give substance to his kingship in all spheres of life.

Although the church fulfils an important role in God's kingdom, his kingdom is much wider and broader than the church. It touches on all spheres of life: commerce (Acts 4:32-35), justice (1 Corinthians 6:1-6); the relationship between master and slave (1 Peter 2:18), the relationship between husband and wife (Ephesians 5:21-32) and many more - even the food and drink we consume (1 Corinthians 10:31).

However, it is about time to move on to the next main part of this section.

2.1.2 The post-colonial phase

This period could be described as the phase of liberation (from colonial rule) and modernisation. The crisis mentioned above, however, did not subside during this period; in fact it deepened and widened. The crisis was not only a political or economical one, but also included a social, cultural, the educational, ethical and the religious dimension.

During the sixties colonial administration *as a policy* was something of the past for most African countries, but the *effects* of colonialism on the administration inherited (e.g. political subsidies, favours and clientalist networks) were not. The tension between traditional culture and modernisation resulted in what Vaughan has called a "divided soul".

The "divided soul"

As indicated above, many Africans have maintained their traditional religions and worldviews. This constitutes one half of their souls and it is traditionally inclined, resisting change. The other half, however,

longed for modernisation and development - a typically Western product.

This also emerged very clearly in the political and social arenas. During the post-colonial independence era the politicians tried to get rid of every trace of the old imperialism. Nevertheless they coveted the benefits of another aspect of Western culture, viz. modernisation.

Unless, however, modernisation is supported by the culture of a country, and unless it is rooted in the national culture, it remains an artificial importation and only superficial development will occur. Radical cultural change can only occur as a result of a change in the consciousness of the people themselves. A real change in the ways people live, behave and develop is the result of *voluntary* change within themselves - in their worldview - which produces new attitudes and modifications in their way of life. Development and modernisation are not the result of the application of foreign imported money, models, methods, assumptions, institutions, innovations and values *imposed* upon them from outside.

It seems as if the compatibility or incompatibility, as well as the conflict of values between modern, Western institutions on the one hand, and African indigenous institutions based on African values on the other hand, had not been carefully and extensively studied. This has resulted in conflict, crisis and finally failure...

Development failed over wide areas in many countries and modernisation switched into reverse gear. If one takes stock of development in Africa today, one sees the opposite: a decline of productivity, creativity, initiative, lack of a sense of direction, purpose, goals and ideas, the absence of viable and stable political systems, a state of national confusion and chaos.

I do not intend to blame only colonialism or the consequences of colonial rule. Neither am I inclined to blame only the African peoples. To be fair, I do think that both parties have contributed their share and are thus responsible for the mess. And I am also convinced that the deepest cause for the phenomenon of a divided soul is the lack of a new, coherent and consistent worldview which could again guide and inspire the African people.

It was to be expected that Africans at a certain stage would react against colonialism and Christianity. I do understand and even sympathise with such reactions, but I doubt whether a reactionary tendency should be the final answer or could offer a real and lasting solution. But in order to be fair, let us have a brief look at these reactions, first against Western colonialism and then against Western Christianity.

Reactions against colonialism

The African personality was treated as one without dignity, equality, worth, rights or freedom. Africans were viewed as primitive in their culture, savage and without history or civilisation with only elementary forms of religion and societal organisation. Surely this Western stereotyping and hence treatment of Africans was totally unacceptable.

The people who lead the reaction aimed at proving the following (1) that Africans have dignity, worth and honour, (2) that Africans have a history, a civilised culture, societal structures and (3) that Africans are capable of becoming scientists, scholars, administrators, etc.

We could divide the people fighting for an own African identity in three main groups or categories:

- * *Africans in diaspora in the West Indies and North America* exerted a powerful influence on the continent of Africa, especially in stimulating racial solidarity and shared blackness. This movement had a great influence also upon African nationalist movements and African literary works.
- * *Nationalist and Pan-African movements* fought for the political and cultural liberation and unification of Africa. Liberation was usually couched in ideological terms such as African personality (Blyden), négritude (Senghor), black consciousness (Nkrumah), ujamaa (Nyerere), uhuru (Kenyatta), African humanism or socialism (Kaunda) and others.
- * *African scholars and writers* tried to convince the West that the African had a dignified personality, a civilised culture, a

history and religion and that he was also capable of good scholarship.

In general it could be said that all these new pioneers of Africa were searching for a typical African personality, an African religion, worldview, "philosophy" and culture. They agreed that both the African identity and the African worldview experienced an identity crisis. But many of them doubted whether such a unique African personality and lifeview could be found in a varied and changing African context. Doubt had also been cast upon the idea of a collective African worldview. However, in spite of this, African scholarship seemed to emphasise the need of taking seriously the traditional African worldviews. They regarded these as significant to the development of new African thinking. Contemporary African systems could - at least partly - be built on the foundations of traditional worldviews. In doing so an attempt was made to alleviate the pervading crises on African soil.

In my opinion one has to be careful to simply revive tradition and then assume that one has solved today's problems. It is impossible to turn the clock back to the past. One could, however, critically choose from traditional Africa what is good and beautiful and use it as building blocks in erecting a new future.

Reactions against Western Christianity

We have already indicated that the missionary approach towards Africa resulted in the African culture and way of life being downplayed and even negated. There was therefore no interest - at least not initially - in developing an indigenous African Christianity and African Theology. African and Western Christians have reacted against this attitude in various ways, and have tried to make Christianity relevant to the African mind. Four of these ways will be discussed briefly.

* *Indigenisation of Christianity*

Western theologians first came up with the idea of indigenising Christianity, giving it roots in Africa, removing its foreign aspects. This was the earlier indigenisation "philosophy" of the "three selves". African churches had to become self-governing, self-supporting and

self-propagating institutions - though they were often ill-equipped and ill-prepared for such a task.

Africans regarded this strategy as paternalistic because the European churches were still regarded as "mothers" and the indigenous churches as the "daughters". Furthermore, it was clear that the three selves were Western concepts - another Western model for the church was simply transplanted to Africa!

In the early 1960's Africans (like Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria) reacted against this earlier Western form of indigenisation by introducing their own, more radical idea. The primary idea was to strip and rid Christianity in Africa of all its foreign Western additions and coverings and to replace it with that which was really African. If Western culture was to be replaced by African culture, the African would understand Christianity better. Therefore Western categories of thought, forms and places of worship, prayers, music etc. should be replaced by African ones. Christianity should be defined from the perspective of the African.

The question concerning this approach is: has Christianity indeed become African or is it just a new tag? What about an African Christian who is already more or less Westernised - does he really want this kind of Christianity? More conservative Christians, who wish to be faithful to the Bible, also want to know: is it a matter of African culture being accommodated to the Bible, or of the Bible being accommodated to African culture?

* *Africanisation of Christianity*

According to the proponents of this principle, the need is not only to strip Christianity of its Western form, but also to control its destiny. Africans must be in charge of church and mission policies. More personnel must therefore be trained to take over the work from the missionaries. Where indigenisation emphasised cultural independence, Africanisation was concerned with organisational independence - even to the extent of a moratorium on all Western missionaries to Africa!

* *Developing an African theology*

During the late sixties and the seventies a new shift in emphasis occurred. This time it moved to a more scholarly level: the search for a *theologia Africana*. It was an attempt to understand the essence of Christianity and to interpret that understanding in terms of the African situation. Africa has to develop its own theology - just as the West developed its own. John S. Mbiti and others contributed immensely towards elevating African religions and "philosophy". African worldview, philosophy and culture were seen as *prolegomena* or preparations for a real African theology. Accordingly an African theology of marriage, worship, God, the church, the ancestors, etc. was advocated.

* *Contextualising Christianity*

The most recent trend goes beyond the previous attempts and puts the emphasis on theological relevance. Christianity has to be made relevant for the African situation or context. An ongoing reciprocation between the text (Scripture) and the context (African culture) should take place.

Context thoroughly influences understanding of the text. All theologies are contextual and contextualised, whether there is an awareness of the fact or not. If one ignores the context, a real danger is that we regard our understanding of the Gospel as the Gospel itself - as happened in the case of Western theology. To be relevant one has to be true to the context. But the other side of the coin is just as important: to be Biblical, one has to be true to the Text!

The problem is that some African theologians tend to overemphasise the context (traditional African religions, worldview, culture etc.) in such a way that it endangers the authenticity and the purity of what is being contextualised (the Gospel). Others again overemphasise the Text to the exclusion of the African context. The crux is, however, that the Gospel should be transmitted both accurately and relevantly. Contextualisation is therefore a complicated process with both pitfalls and promises.

The need for a Christian worldview

All four above-mentioned attempts - whether they succeeded or not - have had one aim in common: to solve the crisis of the relevancy of Christianity for the *total* life of the African, including his culture and even his personal identity. African Christians do not want a Gospel "high in the sky when you die", but are looking for a faith that will give them new direction, help them gain new perspectives and even offer solutions to the many vexing problems confronting them day by day.

The four efforts, however, also have in common that they lack a worldview perspective. In what sense is the Christian worldview approach an improvement? In my view it can be considered an improvement because it penetrates deeper and also offers a wider perspective. In doing so it can really relate Christian faith to life. It is able to address the African situation adequately and effectively. Some of the reasons I can offer are the following:

- * In the first instance it offers a *coherent* perspective on life. It solves the problem which the prominent Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, formulated in the title of his well-known novel: *Things fall apart*. From the perspective of a real Biblical worldview (not a dualist Christian one) we are again able to see why things fall apart as well as the unity of life.
- * In the second place, closely related to the previous, a Christian worldview is a way of seeing, understanding, interpreting and approaching the *totality* of human life from a Biblical perspective. It is an all-encompassing view. There is no vacuum or neutral area that cannot be touched by the Gospel. Every choice and every deed is subjected to God-given norms. As a businessman one has to practice responsible stewardship, as a politician one has to be a servant-leader, as a husband/wife one has to be faithful, as a parent caring etc.
- * In the third place it also solves the problem related to the negation, rejection and replacement of indigenous culture. Moreover it does not have to indigenise, accommodate or

Africanise from the outside, because it *renews and transforms from within*.

- * In the fourth place, because of the above-mentioned reasons, it can also solve the problem of *African identity*. According to a Christian worldview we do not define our identity in terms of something which we own or that we can produce, but in terms of the fact that we are created in God's image, that we live in a close relationship of obedience to Him and his laws. Such an identity - given by God - restores human beings to real dignity.

Conclusion

We have followed the fundamental and rapid transformations which Africa experienced from its colonial to its post-colonial periods. Tremendous spiritual changes, for instance the development from a pre-Christian to a Christian and finally to a post-Christian phase, which took the Western world two thousand years to complete, happened in Africa in the brief span of only one century! We have tried to plumb the inevitable crisis which result from such deep and vast transformations. We have indeed come to realize that contemporary Africa is at the cross-roads. Unless we develop, disseminate and start living according to a consistent Christian worldview - not a dualist or secularist one - it would not be long before we enter an era of post-Christianity and total secularism also in Africa - Africa which is the continent with the fastest growing number of Christians and therefore holds out the promise of becoming *the* Christian continent of the future!

2.2 The present situation of Christianity on the continent

Against the background of the politico-economic situation, we first take a quick look at threats to Christianity and then at the strong and weak points of African Christianity.

In view of the fact that this section will only present a background and an overview in order to help you understand better the problems and the challenges linked to a Christian approach to philosophy, this will be done very briefly and cursorily.

2.2.1 The present politico-economic context

- Power politics and civil wars continuing in spite of democratisation
- Tribalism, class struggle, discrimination.
- As a result of the above and also because of religious persecution and severe droughts, there are millions of refugees all across Africa.
- International (external) debts that cannot be repaid.
- Corruption, nepotism, a small but wealthy élite and landowners as against a mass of impoverished people.
- Large-scale urbanisation as a result of rural impoverishment, unemployment, inflation, little development of human and natural resources.
- Famine, malnutrition, a lack of clean drinking water and medical services, high population increases. (In 1983 already Africa's total population was estimated to be 482 million, and it was then predicted that within 25 years (by 2008) it could be 1,1 billion, which means that Africa will by then have to feed no less than 600 million *extra* mouths.)
- It also appears that the so-called new world order we are entering into is not going to mean a great deal for Africa. The USA and the newly united Europe have their own priorities in a time of worldwide economic recession. And Africa, the "lost" continent, is not high - if at all - on their priority list.

2.2.2 Threats to Christianity

Apart from the fact that these politico-economic factors make life hard for everybody in Africa, there are also specific dangers which threaten Christianity. I will only list some competitors for the soul of Africa, without treating any in detail.

- In the field of religion there is, apart from the *traditional religions*, also *Islam*. Since 1934 Islam has grown by about 500% worldwide (even in Western Europe), as against the 47% growth in Christianity. Christianity and Islam are at present the two world religions with the largest number of adherents: one billion each. Researchers estimate that, although there will soon be about 370 million Christians in Africa, there will also be about 322 million Muslims. Islam is today the dominant religion in 44 countries in the world - of which quite a number are African countries. In some of these countries it is even illegal to spread the Gospel.
- A variety of *Eastern cults* such as Hara Krishna and Transcendental Meditation today also have their adherents in Africa.
- Unbiblical attitudes to life, such as *pragmatism* and *secularism* are increasing, especially among young people and the higher classes. While many are still hesitating on the brink and looking backwards, a large part of the population of Africa has already exchanged their traditional African religions for the - in no way better - secularised Western culture.
- In the final instance there are all sorts of *alien ideologies* which are competing for the hearts of the people of Africa. Until very recently different forms of African socialism were very popular in various countries - not to mention hard-line Marxism!

Against this background Christianity has often been seen as only another possibility, not essentially different from other religions. Many still regard it - even thirty years after independence - as the religion of the Western colonial oppressors!

This confusion in worldview emerges most poignantly at most institutions for higher education in Africa, where a number of foreigners from the West and the East are teaching. Apart from adherents of traditional religions and Islam, there are also Western atheists, secularists and idolators of science. There are lecturers who adhere to Eastern philosophies and cults, Marxists and Christians from

a variety of churches. They all compete, subtly or openly, for the hearts and minds of their students.

In such a confusion of worldviews there is not, of course, the opportunity for the formation of a clear worldviewish perspective in students. Because lecturers contradict each other, the students, many of whom are already confused as a result of the transition from African to Western culture, become more confused. Many either become sceptical or grab frantically for any specimen within the variety of worldviews on the academic marketplace. Some Christian students narrow down their Christian faith to pietistic prayer and song meetings organised by a variety of para-church organisations on campus.

2.2.3 Weak points in African Christianity

- The faith of many Africans is rather *weak* when it comes to professional and economic persecution. In many countries Christians in business, politics and the civil service generally give in to the pressures of the "world", for they do not firmly believe that God will provide when the squeeze is on. This is a major reason for rampant corruption all over Africa.
- *Divisions in Christianity*, especially as a result of denominational differences, weakens the power of the churches. The tragedy is that it is often Western disputes of centuries ago that have been transplanted to the African churches!
- The shadowy side of the unequalled increase in numbers is of course that one can have masses of *nominal Christians* who are still at heart pagans. *Larger* then simply means *fatter* and not *stronger*. The growth in numbers should be accompanied by spiritual growth to maturity in faith. David Barrett warns, for example, that if nothing substantial is done to improve the situation, 40% of Christians in Africa will only be Christians in name by the year 2 000. It is, however, not only Western outsiders but also African Christians who have already directed attention to this grave problem.

- Most spiritual leaders therefore point to the *immense need among Christians to obtain more knowledge of Scripture* and to be better equipped with a view to the quality of their faith.
- There is moreover a need that Christians, who are often perceived to stand outside day-to-day issues, should *become more relevant and involved* in the socio-economic and political life of their environment. There is a complaint that Christians, in spite of their numbers, do not have enough immediate influence in their communities.
- Closely related to this is the *lack of trained Christian leaders* not only in the church, but in fields such as agriculture, the judiciary, economy and business. Africa is not looking for technocrats and bureaucrats, but does have a great need for Christian leaders with vision.
- The next point that I would like to mention is the *great need for Christian literature* able to provide direction. It is true that a variety of ecclesiastical literature is available, such as hymn books and catechism material, evangelistic literature for use in mission work, a little literature for the nurturing of personal faith, simple Bible study guides and courses and some publications aimed at the youth, marriage and family life. Publications, however, which clarify the meaning of Christian faith for the "larger" problems of Africa are few and far between or do not exist at all. I here have in mind literature providing a Christian perspective on the already mentioned socio-economic, political and cultural problems.
- The most important weakness is *the type of Christianity which has predominantly been established in Africa* and which we have already discussed in detail. Unfortunately for African Christianity, it has not been spared the age-old, most dangerous disease of dualist thought. Christian faith is a "spiritual" phenomenon which does not really have meaning for life outside the narrow confines of the individual, church, marriage and family. The life-encompassing liberating power of the Gospel of Christ is individualised and spiritualised to personal conversion and eternal salvation. The truly Biblical kingdom

perspective is lacking, and it is precisely this which is so urgently needed, because Africa has to deal with so many economic, political, social and other problems.

Should African Christianity not succeed in replacing this narrow type of vision of life with a far wider and richer Christian worldview, Christianity will not be able to make its contribution to the salvation of this bleeding continent. It might even happen that instead of ongoing growth, large-scale apostasy might occur among believers, because initially enthusiastic converts will not be able to discern any relevance in the Christian message in terms of the harsh African realities. Christianity only has a chance to counter the all-encompassing traditional African worldviews, totalitarian Islam as well as various kinds of secular ideologies which do offer Africa a politico-economic worldview if it should propose and practice a total, radical and integral worldview and way of life.

2.2.4 Strong points of African Christianity

- I have already pointed out the *spectacular growth* in the number of Christians. Between 300 and 400 million Christians by the year 2 000 means that Africa could claim to be called a Christian continent, in fact *the* Christian continent.
- On the African soil too it has already been proved that *persecution* (in countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique and Angola) has not resulted in the extinction of the church, but has rather led to unprecedented growth. This also indicates that Christianity in Africa is not necessarily superficial. One's faith has to be solid to ensure that one is willing to suffer and even to die for it! And there is no country in Africa which has not yielded its quota of blood witnesses for Christ.
- There have also been various *spiritual awakenings or revivals* (for example, in various East African countries) with marvellous results, such as, for example, care for the poor, widows and orphans, refugees and the oppressed.

- There are also clear signs that African Christianity is moving away from an imported Western to a more *authentically African experience of faith* in, for example, liturgy and theology. The alien Western mantle is being exchanged for genuine African clothes.
- A large percentage of Christians in Africa are *young and although still questioning, enthusiastic about their faith*. 60% of the population of Africa are under 20 years of age.

2.3 Conclusion

From the foregoing exposition it has emerged that two forces especially, viz. Western colonialism and Western Christianity, radically influenced and changed Africa in the course of the past century.

The biggest negative impact of colonialism was not only economic in nature. The "colonialization of the mind" has been much more invidious, for it has led to a syndrome of dependency. Such an attitude has had the effect that Africa saw itself as dependent on the West in every respect - not only financially but also spiritually in the fields of, for example, reflection on economics, politics and society. This is also true for philosophy. As long as this spiritual patronage does not change into a partnership, Africa will not really be free.

In the field of the Christian faith, too, it was a Western form of faith that has dominated Africa. Even the notions of indigenization, Africanization and contextualization have to a large extent been Western notions! Africa itself has gradually had to realize that Christianity is something different from Western culture as well as from traditional African cultures and religions.

There are interesting parallels on the one hand between the struggle of the early Christians (first four centuries A.D.) in North Africa to determine their attitude vis-à-vis the Western Graeco-Roman culture, and the struggle of contemporary African Christians to take a stand vis-à-vis their own traditional cultures. Are the traditional culture and religion to be seen as a stepping-stone or preparation towards perfection in the Christian faith (J. Mbiti) so that *accommodation* is the answer? Or is there a radical difference between traditional cultures, faiths and

Christianity (e.g. B. Kato and T. Adeyemo), so that *transformation* is the answer? Or is there no real difference, so that *syncretism* (for example, in many Independent African Churches) is the right attitude?

The Christians of Africa gradually began to discover the liberating, emancipatory power of the Gospel. In a situation of political oppression it was found that the Gospel could play a critical role in analysing societal issues (the intent of the various liberation theologies). Although this has not really been worked out in terms of a clear Christian societal vision, and had also often been mixed with Marxist and neo-Marxist ideas, it was a positive step.

In this way African Christians gradually began to realize that Christianity is not only something personal or church-related. It has broader implications for the whole of society. This realization of the need of an encompassing Christian worldview, however, is not yet a general phenomenon at all. (I only know of worldview conferences having taken place in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.) To my mind this broadening of perspective should be stimulated in order to make it possible eventually for a Christian philosophy (with a systematically developed anthropology, philosophy of society, etc.) to emerge.

The promotion of a *Christian* worldview for Africa also ties in well with the developments in Africa during the past century with regard to the question of a typical *African* worldview. One could distinguish four phases in this quest.

During the first forty years of this century colonialism and Western ethnocentrism prevailed. According to a researcher like Lucien Levy-Bruhl the black people of Africa do not possess of an own worldview - their ideas being too primitive and barbarous in comparison with Western thought.

In reaction to views such as these, various writers at about the middle of the century maintained that indeed something like an African personality (Blyden), "Négritude" (Césaire and Senghor), Bantu philosophy (Tempels) and an own worldview or framework of thought (Griaule and Kagame) should be acknowledged. The fact that these differed radically from Western ways of thinking did not render them inferior. These ways of thinking formed a logical, coherent whole, a

sort of collective, prescientific "philosophy" or worldview typical of almost the whole of Africa.

In the seventies a critical phase was introduced by people such as Fanon, Crahay, Hountondji, Towa and Wiredu, who doubted the existence of something like a collective African worldview. True "philosophy" is only born in individual thinkers. The "ethnic philosophy" of their precursors was simply a projection into the past, emanating from the rebellion of colonized people against their subaltern status. Tempels' ideas emanated from a Western brain, it is felt, and is just another subtle effort to suppress the African black man through spiritual colonization. Progress would only be possible on condition that so-called traditional African thought be rejected. The assimilation of Western science and technology was regarded as of paramount importance. If there could be talk of African philosophy, it should comply with the standards of Western philosophy!

The latest trend (eighties and nineties) is more moderate. African thinkers (for example, Odeira Oruka) have begun to take their traditional worldviews and sage philosophy serious again. They do agree with their more critical precursors that one cannot speak of one general African worldview, because the diversity on the continent is too great. Although they acknowledge that the traditional worldviews do contain important facets, they also acknowledge the need for adjustment and an openness to assimilating elements from Western and Eastern thought.

One could therefore distinguish the following four phases of reflection with regard to an authentic African worldview: (1) a negation (from the Western side) of its existence, (2) a view (among both Africans and Westerners) that it does exist, (3) a denial (from the side of Africa), and (4) an acknowledgement (by Africans) of the existence and value of traditional worldviews.

In conclusion I would like to underline the fact that we do not need a Christian worldview *for Africa*. Westerners can be of help, but are simply not able to do this - quite apart from the danger of paternalism. What is needed is an *African* Christian worldview - something which can only be offered by Christian Africans themselves.

2.4 Some practical challenges

2.4.1 Quite different

Anybody who has already taught philosophy in Africa will know that African thought does not move along a Western-type niveau of abstraction. Direct experience of a situation, a concrete, practical way of thinking - this is typical of students. (For that reason visual representations of difficult material work well.) They also think more synthetically than analytically. In any case, they do not think as abstract-theoretical-analytical as Westerners do.

African culture is also in the first place an oral culture and not a reading culture. This creates problems, for philosophy does demand a great deal of reading, even though it cannot be conceived of without adequate discussion.

Add to this the fact that knowledge of the development of Western cultural history is minimal among them. This is an important vacuum, because one cannot begin to philosophize without knowing some details of the history of 2 000 years of Western culture.

All this means that teaching philosophy in Africa is not less interesting, but quite different.

My own experience in Africa has, for instance, made me reflect seriously on two issues: (1) Is the *purpose* for which our scientific knowledge strives not one-sided? and (2) should *scientific-theoretical knowledge* really be as highly regarded as it is in the West? Let me explain briefly:

2.4.2 Knowledge for the sake of ... ?

A general, dominant value in the West is the mastery of the environment. This also determines our education and scholarly practice: knowledge for the sake of power, for the sake of dominance. This is, to my mind, a twisting and a limitation of the Biblical mandate to be a steward on earth. Autonomous mastery is not the *final and highest purpose of life* - as the secular West might think. According to the Bible man should cultivate and guard creation with a view to *loving*

service of God and the neighbour. This stewardship is also not its own norm (autonomous), but subject to God and his norms.

Instead of knowledge for the sake of dominion only I think that we - especially in the African context - should stress that knowledge should be striven after for the sake of (1) insight, (2) appreciation, and (3) responsible action - something strongly emphasized by my friend Stuart Fowler of Australia.

* *Insight* is important because students have to be taught to understand themselves, other people and the world in which they live. In secular education, for example, the question about the meaning of things - and this goes for scientific practice too - is seldom asked. Religious and worldview issues are not considered to be an integral part of education. Christian philosophy (in the form of a worldview) can play a very important role in this regard - even though it might not appear to make a real contribution to our control of reality!

* Knowledge with a view to emphasize an *appreciation* of creation also brings about a whole new dimension in our education. Human abilities and relationships, as well as the possibilities of the non-human world (matter, plant and animal) should not only be appreciated to the extent that they can be in the service of human governance. We should appreciate and enjoy the rich diversity with which God has invested creation, because God also intended this as a gift for humankind and not only as something that has to be used. Appreciation should not be regarded as mere recreation or even a waste of time. We cannot serve God fully, if we do not also enjoy the wealth of his gift to us in gratitude - according to the Heidelberg Catechism, our most important task!

Do our students, for example, learn about the richness of human relationships, friendship, sport, art and nature - apart from their possible commercial value? We would definitely find a great openness towards such an attitude among African students. It would, however, not be easy to realize this approach in philosophy and in scientific practice in general, because it is diametrically opposed to the main trends of

Western cultural and scientific practice, which dominate our academic world.

* *Knowledge for the sake of responsible action*, instead of autonomous mastery, will also change our educational and scholarly practice. This ties in with the main purpose set out above, viz. to serve God and the neighbour in love. It does not mean that subjects such as Natural Science, Mathematics and Technology should not have a place in African universities. They would in fact have a *valued place*, but *not the most important place*. Moreover, Philosophy, love of wisdom, and other subjects from the Humanities as well, would come into its own more fully. Wisdom, after all, presupposes not only *insight*, but also *responsible action* as derived from such an insight. This has also been the character of the sage philosophy of traditional Africa.

2.4.3 Only abstract-theoretical knowledge?

Theoretical knowledge is, in the first place, *abstract*. It derives its meaning from the relationship within which it stands towards other concepts in a conceptual system, while concrete concepts relate to a group of objects or characteristics which we experience as real things, events or relationships. An example of a concrete concept is the concept "table". A mathematical system, however, is abstract: a mathematical problem can be solved with a pen and paper or a computer, without any reference to a concrete issue.

Theoretical knowledge, in the second place, identifies *universal laws* - in other words, it identifies patterns which we will find manifested all over.

Theoretical knowledge, in the third place, extends our ability to *control the environment*. This is over-estimated, however, if we think that it provides us with complete knowledge, or the most important form of knowledge.

When African youngsters still received their training from their grandparents, the herbal doctor, the potter, the smith and the trader on

an "in-service" basis, their training was not theoretical (as had also been the case in Europe until about the end of the Middle Ages).

This knowledge was not inferior, however, in comparison with contemporary scientific knowledge. Under the guidance of a teacher/instructor their attention was focused on (1) *concrete objects and situations*. In these they could distinguish (2) *general patterns*. (In the case of a carpenter's apprentice attention was focused, for example, on the texture of specific types of wood.) The generalizations which they could make on the basis of that, however, were not dependent on conceptual abstraction, but referred to concrete things. They were therefore not *abstract*, but *concrete* generalizations. In the third place (3) the individual qualities of things could become known. This cannot happen in modern, abstract scientific knowledge which only seek to understand the universal lawful behaviour of its objects of study.

Scientific knowledge is thus not the only way in which to obtain knowledge of reality in a systematic, disciplined way. It is possible to focus in different ways, which can lead to different forms of knowledge. I would like to discuss two of these:

* *Concrete knowledge*

To focus does not put any priority on the visual capacity of man. It is simply a metaphor to indicate that man has the ability to focus his attention on a specific point and this applies to his ability to think also. Concrete learning activities, aimed at coming to concrete knowledge, is therefore not a "soft" choice for students who do not achieve well in rigorous theoretical knowledge. It is not a primitive form of learning either, and therefore knowledge which can be shed as one advances to more abstract knowledge. It is a parallel approach with its own strengths. It can, moreover, be striven for with as much discipline as scientific knowledge. This should be stressed, seeing that reigning Western cultural values regard theoretical knowledge as more important, as higher-level knowledge.

Concrete knowledge is also not less reliable or accurate than theoretical knowledge. Just think of the person who is able to select a ripe watermelon by knocking on it; the winetaster who can determine the

capacity of the wine to develop well; the farmer who can determine the quality of a piece of land simply by looking at it or feeling it; or the snooker player who can send balls in exactly the right direction unerringly.

Such knowledge is acquired by concentration on the rich and varied details of concrete things, to make deductions following repeating patterns; and to test these generalizations by again focussing on concrete reality. Finally a systematic source of knowledge is compiled which can identify universal patterns in the creational order.

Seeing that only a small percentage of students ever do develop a very high level of skill in abstract thought, concrete knowledge would enable students to develop a powerful means of identifying universal patterns in the creational order and to understand them. One does not need formal, technical language to achieve this. Concrete, everyday language can be used to describe the discovered universal lawful behaviour of the objects of study.

* *Individual knowledge*

Students can, however, also be guided to direct their attention to the unique, individual traits of the concrete experiential world. Knowledge about reality is not exhausted by the universal traits which we try to represent in our theories and (concrete) generalizations. Each thing - even the mass products which we create - has, apart from the universal also an individual side. (The pecan tree in front of my house is not only a tree - in other words, the universal, that which it shares with other trees - but also a very specific tree, a pecan, and special among all other pecans.) Our Western scientific tradition tends to regard the individual side of things as being of lesser value, a mere obstacle in the way of operational efficiency!

Naturally it is not possible to come to grips with the individual aspects of reality by way of the categories of an abstract, conceptual system. It can only be learned via a face-to-face interaction with concrete things. For that reason the lecturer can only teach this to students by focussing attention, through example and demonstration, on the individual qualities, so that students can come to a heightened awareness of these.

In recapitulation: Instead of merely theoretical knowledge, our universities ought to be far more open, creative and willing to investigate the possibilities of other forms of knowledge. Instead of using monofocals, we should use multifocals! Naturally, too, the necessary integration should take place between these different kinds of knowledge and of learning.

It is especially in the African context that other forms of knowing become very relevant. With African students, as mentioned above, direct experience and a concrete-practical-synthetic-holistic mode of thought are uppermost. My personal experience has been that not only many Western students in South Africa but most Africans experience problems with abstract-theoretical-conceptual thought.

This is a further very important reason why I hold the opinion that the construction of an eventual African Christian philosophy (something theoretical-abstract) should start on the level of a (concrete-prescientific) worldview.

Somebody might think that I (as a white Westerner) have not quite shed my Western sense of superiority over my black African compatriots. I might seem to be advocating a special philosophical education for them - but this is not the case at all.

Should teaching (of philosophy and in general) be expected to equip young people for service, this cannot be done in a uniform way. God has given people a variety of gifts and talents with which to serve. All of us should serve the Lord, but not all in the same way. In order to do justice to this requirement, education too has to be varied and diverse - in contrast to our present uniform mass production.

If we emphasize different talents, this does not mean that we categorize students in terms of what they deserve or on the basis of their value. The emphasis is not on *more or less* gifted, but on gifts of a *different nature* in different students - all of whom are important and essential. All the different qualities are essential for the well-being of the whole community.

To summarise: Christian philosophers should be critical about the current secular Western idealization of science solely for the purpose of

autonomous mastery, with a one-sided emphasis on the theoretical-abstract facet of scientific endeavour. Stated in terms of Dooyeweerd's theory of modal functions, scholarly work reflects *all* the modalities - from the numerical to the pistic modality. For instance: apart from the abstract-theoretical (referring to the *logical* modality), it also reveals a *lingual* facet, a *social* aspect (it contains a vision to be communicated) and a *psychic* aspect. Concrete, individual knowledge is founded in the psychic function, it refers to perception through the senses.

African universities, and especially Christian universities (like those at Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein) to my mind, have a particular calling to investigate the role of concrete-individual knowledge within their scholarly activities. This brings me to the last practical problem which I would like to mention:

2.4.4 Reformational philosophy in South Africa

There are various reasons why I chose to discuss the Departments of Philosophy of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the University of the Orange Free State under the rubric of "practical problems".

Different reasons could be mentioned why neither of these two departments have trained even one (black) African Christian philosopher: (1) Students who choose Philosophy for their graduate studies usually become teachers, ministers etc. (2) Philosophy as an option on post-graduate level is considered by very few students, because positions for professional philosophers - especially Christian philosophers - are very limited. (3) An additional problem for potential (black) African students is the huge gap between the way they traditionally experienced the world and the Western worldview and philosophy. (4) Because of the apartheid policy black students were till recently not permitted to study on the "white" campuses of Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein. (5) Further, most publications written by members of these departments have been in Afrikaans. This has had the result that potential philosophers in South Africa and the rest of Africa could not be reached by the Reformational message. This is a tragic situation, but unfortunately only too true. (6) Christian philosophy in South Africa has been strongly Eurocentric. Lecturers did research on Western problems and read papers at international

conferences in Europe and North America. Contact with Africa, interest in traditional African worldviews and typical African issues were almost totally absent.

This situation will have to change *radically* if the mentioned two departments should in the future hope to attract students or even survive as departments. Should they become more African-oriented, however, the Reformational message can be carried far and wide across the continent from the southern tip upwards.

In all justice one should mention that all philosophy departments in South Africa at present have to do with serious internal problems. Professional training has been prioritized, and Philosophy, which is not a bread and butter subject, suffers because of this. Most students are not interested in the subject, and those who are interested have over-full curricula which do not leave room for Philosophy as a subject. Universities are also struggling to keep up as a result of financial constraints. All this contributes to lecturers having a heavy teaching load. (The Philosophy department at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education has the services of only four teaching staff - for a variety of courses and a great number of students!) There are few opportunities for philosophical discussion, and research publications has to be produced during night shifts. There is not even an opportunity to reflect in peace and quiet on what Christian philosophers have succeeded in achieving in the past fifty years. (I have in mind here the contributions of the first and second generations of Christian philosophers like H.G. Stoker (1899-1993), E.A. Venter (1914-1968), P.de B. De Kock (1913-1977), J.A.L. Taljaard (1915-1994), H.J. Strauss (born 1912), P.G.W. du Plessis (born 1932) and N.T. van der Merwe (born 1932) - not to mention those of the third generation still in active service.) Such a survey of the status of Christian philosophy in South Africa is indeed an important part of a paper such as this. Serious introspection is needed, because the Christian Philosophy departments at Potchefstroom and Bloemfontein experience serious crises to perform their task effectively ... In spite of all these drawbacks we should at the same time keep in mind that, during the past half a century, at these two institutions not only hundreds, but in fact thousands of students have been equipped with a reformational perspective.

Following this very long section on the first point (the *problem*), what follows are a few quick ideas on the second point (the *potential*), as well as the third point (the *plan*).

3. THE POTENTIAL

One need not for a moment doubt the possibilities open to a Christian philosophy in Africa. Christianity is growing at an incredible tempo - as has already been indicated. Christianity has also already gone beyond the phases of mere conversion and revival, and is on the way to reformation as I could witness during many visits to quite a number of African countries. What I have in mind is the following: I see *conversion* as the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a person, so that he subjects himself to Christ, his Redeemer and Master. *Revival* is the renewal of faith of a considerable number of people of (a) specific church/es. *Reformation* is a renewal which is so general and so radical that it clearly influences the direction of a culture and the restructuring of a society. (To be able to attain such a reformation, a Christian worldview and philosophy is necessary.) African Christianity has also begun to realize that the Christian faith differs from both Western secular culture and ideologies and from their own traditional African cultures and religions. Recapitulated: Africa is ready for a broader and a deeper Christian-Reformational worldview and eventually philosophical interests.

This potential could be indicated more concretely through fixing the attention on specific institutions: (1) Christian liberal arts colleges, (2) theological schools and (3) secular universities.

3.1 Christian liberal arts colleges

Upon independence in the sixties, most new governments in Africa took over and secularized the higher educational institutions and schools which had come into being through the initiative of Christian missions, because they thought they could manage them better. As already indicated above, this amounted to an abysmal failure. Frustration with the unsatisfactory situation at state institutions has in the past few years led churches and individuals to again take initiative in establishing private Christian schools and colleges. At the moment these colleges are flourishing - they cannot accommodate all the

students fleeing from the state institutions. They do not only maintain Christian, but also high academic standards. I am aware, for example, of a few of them that have received university status or will do so shortly following an intensive screening procedure.

On a recent trip, for example, I had contact with the following ten existing or to be founded Christian liberal arts colleges. In Rwanda: (1) Université Protestant Afrique Central, PO Box 1668, Kigali, Rwanda. In Kenya: (2) Daystar University College, PO Box 44400 Nairobi; (3) Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa, PO Box 62157, Nairobi; (4) St Paul's United College, PO Private Bag, Limuru; (5) Africa Nazarene University, PO Box 53067, Nairobi. In Zimbabwe: (6) Christian College of Southern Africa, PO Box 3488, Harare; (7) Africa University, PO Box 1320, Mutare. In Uganda mention can be made of (8) the Uganda Martyrs University (Roman Catholic) (9) the Christian University of East Africa, PO Box 7088, Kampala and (10) one being planned for Northern Uganda (contact address Prof. C.F. Odaet, PO Box 7062, Kampala).

Most of these colleges/universities are being supported by a specific church or a group of churches. As an example mention can be made of the Seventh Day Adventists which established the following liberal arts colleges: Université Adventiste d'Afrique Central, PO Box 625, Gisenyi, Rwanda; University of Eastern Africa (Baraton), PO Box Private Bag, Eldoret, Kenya; Solusi College, Private Bag T5399, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe; Bugema Adventist College, PO Box 6529, Kampala, Uganda; Adventist College of West Africa, PO Box 21244, Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria; Valley View College, PO Box 9358 Airport-Accra, Ghana, and Helderberg College, PO Box 22, Somerset West 7130, South Africa. Lecturers from these Adventist colleges all over the world meet once a year, for example, for a week-long conference on "The integration of faith and learning". (In 1993 this was held at the Helderberg College in South Africa.)

When I was lecturing in Butare during March, the planners of the to-be-founded Protestant University for Central Africa (in Kigali) requested me to find at least one lecturer in Christian-Reformational philosophy and the Protestant Faculty in Butare needed a second Christian philosopher. Unfortunately the situation in Rwanda has changed radically and tragically since April.

Some of these colleges thus already realize that it is not possible or easy to embed Christian faith in scientific practice without Christian philosophy. Others have not progressed that far yet, because they still link their Christian character to church control and/or various kinds of church activities on campus.

As already indicated above, there is an awareness among many African Christians and Christian colleges that the Gospel can indeed play a critical role. Unfortunately many still think that this can only happen through the input of the *church* and in an *ecclesiastical* fashion. To be done in a scholarly way, calls for contributions in a *theological* fashion, as for example in a *theological* ethics, politics, ecology, societal critique, etc. In this way penetration to the roots of their cultures are inhibited. Morally admirable Christian leaders are trained, but the young leaders are not really fully and adequately equipped to give Christian guidance in a traditional or secular society. To achieve this deeper worldviewish and Christian-philosophical reflection is needed. One should remember too that for many philosophy *as such* is a secular endeavour - a Christian philosophy accordingly sounds like a *contradictio in terminis*. The Gospel, they reason, should after all be adequate to all our needs!

It is understandable that some Christians become frustrated by such ecclesiastico-theological restraints, and finally join a secular political party or school of thought. Confessing *Christians* in South Africa who propagate a *secular* political policy, or liberation theologians who seek help from Marxists to make their theology socially relevant are examples of this trend.

The fact that many of the colleges are still strongly church-oriented has the implication that Reformational philosophy have to be offered cautiously in order to avoid unnecessary resistance. Accordingly it should be stated clearly that this philosophy does not belong to a specific *church* (the Reformed) or is based on specific church *confessions* (for example, from the sixteenth century), but that it involves a broader Biblical *worldview* which transcends denominational boundaries.

3.2 Theological schools

The *ACTEA directory of theological schools in Africa* (1985) gives details of about 750 institutions (Bible Schools, theological schools and Departments of Religion at universities) in 41 African countries. As a result of various reasons (among others reasons of security) not all information from all countries had been included. It is estimated that there are about 1 000 such institutions all over Africa. About 100 of them could be classified as being "Evangelical".

For understandable reasons, theological training plays an important role on the continent. It is certainly a very important effort and contribution by the different churches in terms of Christian higher education. Many of the theological institutions have, however, also begun to realize that their training should be much more comprehensive if they really want to have an influence on the broad African society, and some of them have already included subjects such as psychology as well as social, economic and political sciences in their curricula. Some of them already offer training for teachers and for other professions than just evangelists and ministers.

These are positive developments. Theological schools can be the starting point of a vision that the Kingship of Christ is valid for the *whole* spectrum of scholarship and scientific practice (and not just for theology) and for the *whole* of life. Should such a broad worldview be accepted, some of these schools could be extended to become Christian liberal arts colleges and eventually even Christian universities. Even more basic than additional subjects (as indicated above) would then be the implementation of a course in a Christian-reformational worldview at all these institutions.

3.3 Secular universities

Apart from the Christian liberal arts colleges and the theological schools - already providing opportunities enough to start with! - there are also devoted Christians who teach various subjects at different secular (state) institutions. The potential available here should not be under-estimated.

4. THE PLAN

What follows is not a carefully detailed strategy, but a few thoughts for consideration.

4.1 Literature

The first point that I would like to emphasize is the need for literature, because this can reach places and people that could not be reached otherwise. The language in which the material is written is also important. Should Dooyeweerd not have had his *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* translated into English, the Reformational philosophy from the Netherlands would not have had nearly the impact it has had across the world. (Without English literature on the Reformational philosophy, this international symposium would have been nearly unthinkable!) Because it is impossible to publish in the more than 800 indigenous languages of Africa, English, French and Portuguese are the appropriate languages. I think it is common knowledge that very little is available on Reformational worldview and philosophy in the latter two languages.

Elementary literature *on what it really means to live in a Christian way in all areas of life*. (A Christian way of life is of decisive importance, because not many Christians will reach the (reflective) worldviewish stage and even less Christians will attain a philosophical level.)

Literature available at the following levels that need further companions, include:

* *Examples of material on basic worldview issues*: B. Frey et al., *All of life redeemed; Biblical insight for daily obedience* (1983), A.M. Wolters, *Creation regained; Biblical basics for a reformational worldview* (1985), B.J. Walsh & J.R. Middleton, *The transforming vision; shaping a Christian worldview* (1984) and G.J. Spykman, *Spectacles; Biblical perspectives on Christian Scholarship* (1985, reprinted 1991). These books were naturally written in the first place for a Western audience. I tried to write something more specifically African in my *The liberating message; a Christian worldview for Africa* (1994). These kinds of publications will provide the necessary basis for the following level:

* *Elementary introductions to Reformational Philosophy*: J.M. Spier's *An introduction to a Christian philosophy* (1966), L. Kalsbeek's *Contours of a Christian philosophy; an introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's thought* (1975), D.F.M. Strauss's *Man and his world* (1990), as well as translations of Dutch publications such as R. van Woudenberg's *Geloven en denken; inleiding tot een Christelijk filosofie* (1992).

* *Applications of Reformational philosophy to different disciplines*. If, as suggested above, theological schools should be used as growth points, a book such as G.J. Spykman's *Reformational theology; a new paradigm for doing dogmatics* (1992) would be valuable. There is, however, as big - if not bigger - a need for indicating the relevance of Reformational thought in other fields of study as well. Fortunately the writings of P. Marshall and R. Mouw (politics), M. Stuffleau (natural sciences), B. Goudzwaard, A. Cramp and H. Antonides (economics), C. Seerveld and N. Wolterstorff (the arts), H. van Brummelen, S. Fowler and J. van Dyk (education), A. de Graaff and W. Ouweneel (psychology), H. van Riessen and E. Schuurman (technology/engineering), S.U. Zuidema and J. Olthuis (religion), M.C. Smit and C.T. McIntire (history), M. Elaine Botha (sociology) - to mention only a few examples - have already cleared the way.

* *The relevance of Reformational thought for practical issues* is another area with unlimited possibilities. Here I think, for example, of the Christian Labour Association of Canada's publications on a Christian approach to labour issues. In Africa there is a great need for a Christian philosophy of society, a Christian perspective on politics and the state, Christian perspectives on all facets of developmental work, etc.

4.2 Lecturers from the West

I have already mentioned that I found, among various liberal arts colleges and theological schools in Africa an openness to invite and/or appoint Christian philosophy teachers from the West. Most probably it will be easier for young (unmarried) or retired lecturers to accept such an invitation for any length of time. For other lecturers it could be a very special experience to offer a three-month course in Reformational Philosophy - possibly during a sabbatical.

4.3 Training of African lecturers

The ideal is that Africa should in the end have its own corps of trained teachers of Reformational Philosophy. Initially, however, they would have to be trained in South Africa, Europe and North America. Ways will have to be found to identify promising candidates and means will have to be found to enable them to receive the essential training.

4.4 Conferences, courses, etc.

My personal experience has been that conferences do have value, but not as much value as courses where people are trained intensively. The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education is therefore planning to offer from July 1995 courses in a Christian worldview and a Christian scientific practice in other places in Africa (Zimbabwe and Kenya). Lecturers from Christian liberal arts colleges in surrounding countries will also be invited and asked to offer lectures themselves in which they indicate how they would approach their subjects in a Christian perspective. The final purpose is to inspire lecturers to produce textbooks in an African context written from a Christian perspective - for which there is a huge need.

4.5 Partnership agreements

The idea and ideal is that institutions such as the Free University, Calvin College, the Institute for Christian Studies, Dordt College, Redeemer College and King's College should enter into a partnership agreement with institutions in Africa. The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education at the moment has three such agreements with like-minded institutions in Africa, and this is mutually very enriching. Information, publications, students and lecturers can be exchanged, financially stronger institutions can help weaker ones, etc. Why should some of the mentioned Western institutions not (along the lines of the model of the "Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wysbegeerte" in the Netherlands) sponsor and man special chairs in Reformational philosophy in Africa?

4.6 International facilitation

A final consideration is that ideals such as those mentioned here would probably have better a chance of success in terms of planning, implementation and administration should mutual consultation and co-ordination be possible. And here I am not only thinking in continental, African terms. I am convinced that in other parts of the world there is a similar need for a Christian-reformational philosophy. For that reason the idea of an international facilitating body appeals to me. Such a body could, for example, co-operate with other international organizations such as the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, so that duplication can be avoided and visiting lectureships be co-ordinated. Should this symposium wish to consider such an avenue, I see unrivalled opportunities for Reformational thought.

5. CONCLUSION

This has been my story. We began with the desperate situation in Africa. I cannot do anything but return to it.

Before I left Rwanda in March, a lecturer there told me about the cynical remarks of his prosperous, complacent colleagues from Europe: "What on earth are you going to do in Africa? It is a dying, lost continent. Stay home and enjoy your retirement!" His response was brief and to the point: "I am going to Africa precisely because you regard it as a lost continent. Did not Christ Himself come to this earth because it was lost?"

I am quite sure that - in spite of higher living standards, advanced technology etc. - there are more lost continents in our contemporary world. More countries - including the Western countries - than only the African countries are today longing for the radical, liberating message of a Christian-Reformational worldview and philosophy.

"May the favour of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands ... yes, establish the work of our hands" (Psalm 90:17). This is, in conclusion, my sincere prayer for Christian-Reformational philosophy all over the world.
