

# THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

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## THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS FOR THE WESLEYAN CHURCH IN AFRICA

After consulting some of our pastors and leaders (past and present), there are at least “Four top theological concerns that we think are critical for our Church to address”: (1) Syncretism; (2) The So-called “Prosperity Gospel”; (3) Miracles (“signs and wonders”) Today; (4) Wesleyan Distinctive.

### Syncretism

Some form of Syncretism is being practiced by Christians across Africa; members of the Wesleyan Church are no exception. It is true that some of our members do welcome and participate in traditional ceremonies that are contrary to the Bible and the tenets of the Wesleyan Church. This mars both their testimonies and the authority and mission of our Church. Thus, we need to address this problem biblically and theologically to deliver our members and preserve our scriptural tenets and authority.

### The So-called “Prosperity Gospel”

The teaching of the African Independent Churches (AICs) vis-à-vis Neo-Pentecostalism that spirituality, healing and economic prosperity are inseparable, is being conveyed across Africa more passionately in this century (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2005:9-28, 231-256). This teaching promises that the impossibilities of Christians will become possibilities, their “lack turned into abundance”, their “failures . . . transformed into successes”, their sicknesses turned into healing, locked doors (i.e. for jobs or travels) will be opened (Ibid, 11). Their key

biblical passages are 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 1 Peter 2:24 (we know that they do wrench these passages out of their contexts). In order for their congregations to acquire these “blessings”, they anoint those congregations with oil that “God has inspired”, as well as convince them to buy the oil to take to their homes to smear it or drink it (Ibid, 239). Furthermore, they sell pieces of their “mantles” (clothes that the preachers have worn), “holy sand”, “holy water”, “holy sand”, “the blood of Jesus” (This is a red fruit juice that they say is the actual blood of Jesus.), and tell their congregations to carry them into their homes and eat, drink and scatter them in their homes/in their yards. Sadly, members of our local Wesleyan churches visit these churches and buy these items!

The Bible contains records of many followers of God who prospered economically (i.e. Abraham, Joseph, Solomon, Job), the promised prosperity of those who would “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:19-33; cf. Joshua 1:8) and the prosperity of the wicked (Psalm 73). Notwithstanding, it does not teach an automatic physical or economic prosperity subsequent to receiving Jesus Christ (Paul himself was needy; the Lord refused to heal him [Philippians 4; 2 Corinthians 12]).

There is an urgent need therefore for the Wesleyan Church of Africa to address this concern in a way that will speak to our needy members, give them biblical hope and deliver

them from this web of deceit and eventual spiritual death.

### **Miracles (“signs and wonders”) Today**

Africans are born into communities permeated with “spiritual powers” of varying forms and influences. These “powers” are present in the Church of Jesus, including the Wesleyan Church, across our continent. Some Christians have suffered from these “powers” directly or indirectly, or are suffering from them.

In view of this, self-proclaimed “praying mothers”, “praying fathers”, “apostles”, and “prophets” have arisen and opened “deliverance centers”, or hold crusades in public places, in order to heal/deliver people “instantly”. Christians of all walks, including Wesleyans, attend their “miracle-deliverance services”.

Like the “prosperity” issue, the Bible records several miraculous signs of Jesus (e.g. providing food, healing the sick and raising the dead) and of the apostles’. However, unlike the so-called miracles of today that are intentionally publicized for the performers recognition for financial benefits, Jesus and the apostles avoided drawing public attention to themselves. In fact, Jesus told His onlookers and

those whom He healed repeatedly to not publicize His miraculous acts or misunderstand His purpose (cf. Matthew 8:4; Mark 7:32-37; 8:22-26; John 6).

The Bible reveals that the gifts of healing and miraculous powers, like the rest of the spiritual gifts, are given by the Holy Spirit to serve Christ’s Church. They are meant to promote Christ and grow His Church rather than to promote or enrich those who administer them. On the contrary, managers of these gifts today promote themselves and their ministries and acquire huge financial gains, particularly.

The Wesleyan Church of Africa needs to address this concern too, so that our members might worship Jesus rather than men, as well as pay their tithes and offerings for the proclamation of the true Gospel.

### **Wesleyan Distinctive**

The urgent need for members of the Wesleyan Church of Africa to know and practice our Distinctive cannot be overemphasized. It is the *sine qua non* for resisting syncretism and the anti-biblical teachings and persuasions that we have highlighted above.



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## OUR VIEW ON MARRIAGE/HOMOSEXUALITY

Marriage is between a man and a woman joined as husband and wife in an intimate partnership of life and love, procreation and raising of children. Marriage between same persons of the sex is a sad story and very unjust. However gay people deserve respect, justice, love and pastoral service as any other people. However, it is not marriage because it is not designed in God's way; marriage was first designed in the Garden of Eden with two people of the opposite sex, Adam and Eve, so when we talk of marriage, we are talking of a man and a woman coming to live together. It doesn't matter how big would be the crowd that would agree on the right of the same sex marriage, it is an abomination and whoever does it is opposing God. In Genesis 19 God destroyed the two cities Sodom and Gomorrah because men were doing what was unnatural. In Leviticus 18:22 it says, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind, it is abomination." [KJV]. "No man is to have sexual relations with another man; God hates that." [GNB]. Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, they must be put to death and their blood shall be upon their head.

In the New Testament in Romans 1:26-27 it says. "Because they do this, God has given them over to shameful passions. Even the woman perverts the natural use of their sex by unnatural acts, in the same way the men abandoned natural sexual relations with woman and burnt with passion for each other. Men do shameful things with each other, and as a result they bring upon themselves the punishment they deserve for their wrongdoing."

I harshly condemn the practice of homosexuality and people who carry a training to influence and habituate the younger generation by promising them a good life, buying them with good amount of money.



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Currently in Uganda there is an estimate of about of about 600,000 gay persons. Homosexuality is not a genetic issue but it is a practice being natured by a ruined mind. I therefore urge all Christian around the world to treat gays/lesbians as people with a disability, people who need help and the help that they need can be offer to them by devoted Christians.

It is clear that all sin leads to eternal death. Adultery, witchcraft, lust, fornication, pride, etc. lead to eternal death just as same sex leads to eternal death, so these people need to be treated as human beings who are in need of our savior. I believe that the blood of Jesus is sufficient for all kinds of sins. Let us reach them with the message of hope which is in Jesus Christ.

### **TRADITION AND CULTURE [UGANDA]**

Same sex relationships in Uganda are unacceptable to the majority of Ugandans. It is being practiced by the few individuals who practice it against the traditions and cultures of their tribes. Whoever does it is considered a nuisance, a trouble maker, he is a curse, he/she is from excommunicated from the community and he can be put to death by mob justice.

### **THE UGANDAN LAW**

The law on Homosexuality was placed during colonial rule in a penal code Act of 1950, section 145 as unnatural offence. It's under the penal code against order of nature and if anyone is guilty is to face life imprisonment.

Section 146, says any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in section 145 is to serve 7 years in prison.

## GAYS/LESBIANS: BIBLICAL CHRISTIANS?

The intentional visit by Jesus Christ to Zacchaeus resulted in Zacchaeus becoming transformed from a thief, self-centered, mean person to an others-centered giver and repentant thief (Luke 19:1-8). Jesus described this transformation (*metamorphosis*) as "Salvation" (verse 9). Interestingly, this is the kind of "salvation" of "the lost" that He (Jesus) came into the world for (verse 10). Having experienced this "salvation", Paul the Apostle begged his congregation in Rome to make up their minds so that at a definite point they should "present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God...: and to stop allowing themselves to "be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but (to) be transformed by the RENEWING of (their) minds...(Romans 12:1, 2). To Pastor Titus, Paul said Jesus died so all those whom He saves might be "redeemed from all wickedness" and be purified (2:11-14). In Romans 1:24ff., gay and lesbianism are "unnatural"! In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul told the Corinthians that "Sodomites" will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Peter urged his congregation to stop living their lives as in the past, but that they should be holy as God Himself was holy (1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:24, 25; cf. Leviticus 19:2; 11:44). Every Christian is expected to live holily. Therefore, the Spirit of God and of the Christ is present to "convict the

world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The WHOLE Bible, God's Word, is here to teach us, rebuke us, instruct us and correct us against sins (2 Timothy 3:16-17; cf. Psalm 119:9, 11; Hebrews 4:12.). The author of Hebrews warned his congregation, unequivocally that continuing in deliberate sin forfeited their "salvation" (10:26-31; cf. 5:11-6:6). Will it be different in the 21st Century?

Having delve through the Bible, some critical questions come to mind: (1) Did Jesus die to save gays and lesbians? (2) Can gays and lesbians be saved and become holy? (3) Should gays and lesbians who claim to be visited by Jesus and are saved continued in their sins and still claim that they are saved? (4) Can Jesus say of them that "salvation has come to their households" like He declared about Zacchaeus?

Beloved, let us remember that "Christians" are disciples/followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). Christians are "born anew from above", or they are unqualified for God's kingdom (John 3:1-8).

Therefore, I plead with all who profess to be "Christians" to OBEY the whole Bible--God's Word. You are on your way to Gehenna (Hell Fire) because your names will NOT be written in God's Book of Life (Revelation 20:11-15). "He that has ears to hear, let him hear"!



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## BUILDING HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Effective ministry is almost always done in teams. Perhaps the most effective minister of the gospel in the past century is Dr. Billy Graham, but one need not look very closely to discover that the effectiveness of his ministry was due in a large part to the teams that ran his organization and planned and ran the different events. Even the ministry of Jesus functioned through teams – an inner team of three disciples, the twelve, and an even larger team of men and women who aided and enabled His ministry.

Ministry teams are formed in a variety of ways. Some are voluntary – that is, team members join the team because they want to be part of accomplishing the ministry that is envisioned – members of a worship team in a local church often are this kind. Some teams are chosen or appointed by the leader(s) – that is, members look for and select the team members specifically – increasingly around the world Wesleyan churches are moving to the appointment of many of the leaders rather than electing them. Some teams are elected by a group that wants them to serve – usually national/district/ local boards and often the boards of auxiliaries are made up this way.

Regardless of how the teams are formed, it is evident that there is a direct relationship between how well the team works together and how effective they are in accomplishing their mission. (“If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” Mark 3:25 NIV) Accordingly, wise leaders will give significant attention to building effective teams as part of their leadership responsibilities. Many things contribute to team effectiveness. What follows are seven observations I’ve made about effective teams.

**1. Effective teams using members where they best fit.** Good leaders will work to identify the strengths of the various members and help

people fit into the team where their strengths are capitalized on for the benefit of the team. Team members should have clear job descriptions so they know what they are expected to do, as well as to know what is not their responsibility. Leaders will also make an effort to avoid overworking the most effective team members by helping them to focus on the area(s) where they can most benefit the team effort, and freeing them from things that others could do as well.

**2. Effective teams know who the leader is and follow his/her leadership.** Few things can destroy the effectiveness of a team as when members refuse to recognize and follow their leader. The leader is not always the most skilled or experienced member of the team, yet the leader is responsible for making the team works together to accomplish its goals. At the same time, a wise leader will welcome and listen to the ideas and input of team members when developing strategy and making decisions.

**3. Effective teams celebrate team success over individual accomplishment.** Certainly, when the team succeeds there are certain members who have contributed more to that success than others. Leaders should recognize and praise the accomplishments of those members, but ultimately the success of the team as a whole is of greater importance.

**4. Effective teams train together as a team.** It is not unusual in the sporting world for all-star teams to be created by pulling together the stars from a number of local clubs/teams. These all-star teams often fail to deliver as hoped, not because they don’t have skillful players, but simply because they have never really become a “team” by training together. Most ministry teams have a lot of ministry and work to get accomplished and it is tempting to simply “get down to business” rather than to deliberately set time aside to train together as a team. Wise

leaders make team training a priority.

**5. Effective teams have a clear focus on the mission.** Team members clearly know what they are trying to get accomplished. It is the leader's role to make sure that the mission is clearly communicated, accepted, and pursued. This especially true of administrative boards (local/District/National) who can become so focused on keeping things running and dealing with problems that they lose sight of the mission of proclaiming the gospel, winning the lost, discipling believers, and expanding the work of the kingdom.

**6. Effective teams have the full participation and commitment of all members.** You may have seen or even been part of a team where one person pretty much did everything while the rest of the team simply stood by and watched. The energy, skill, and passion of an individual may produce good results in the short term, but

cannot compare to the long term results produced by a team where all members combine their energy, skills, and passion. As the proverb puts it. "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

**7. Effective teams develop an atmosphere of trust.** Trust takes time to develop, which is why teams tend to become more effective the longer they work together. However, it takes more than time to develop trust – team members need to get to know one another well enough that they have confidence in the heart and motives of other team members. This comes by deliberately cultivating an atmosphere of openness and honesty between team members.

The long term effectiveness of your leadership will depend as much or more on the effectiveness of your ministry teams as it will on your knowledge, skills and abilities. Make team building a high priority for your leadership!



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