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The Threat of Pluralism, Postmodernism, and Dual Allegiance to the Development of Biblical Spirituality in Africa

Introduction

Contemporary Africa is home to all the world major religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. In addition, there are philosophical and religious thoughts such as pluralism and postmodernism. To further complicate the situation is that fact that all these religious and philosophical ideologies are established on the back of African Traditional Religions (ATR), which seem rooted in the lives of most Africans and could be said to even characterize the post-conversion worldview of most Christian converts on the continent. Thus, it seems the multiplicity of religious convictions and even competition for adherents on the continent leave a kind of crisis in the area of spirituality. In the midst of these contending religions and philosophical ideologies is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which strives to cultivate and promote Christian spirituality based on a biblical-shaped worldview. This article examines the threat of Pluralism, Postmodernism, and Dual Allegiance (PPMDA) to the development of biblical spirituality. Towards this agenda, the article is structured into five parts. Since the focus of this paper excludes an in-depth consideration of the origins and philosophical underpinning of these religious experiences, the first three sections survey Pluralism, Postmodernism, and Dual Allegiance; giving brief attention more to the defining elements of these persuasions. The fourth and final part provides some insights on

how these religious and philosophical ideologies affect the development of biblical spirituality in order to offer suggestions on what the Adventist Church might do to limit these influences.

Pluralism

Pluralism as a term has been used in three ways in societal discourse. It could have political, social, or religious connotations. In the field of politics, pluralism exists where multiple distinct groups share power to promote compromise and coalitions preventing any form of political absolutism (Pratt 2015:144, 145). Social pluralism could be said to exist in a situation where distinctions are made “between private values for life and public values for social order” (145). The third classification of pluralism, which is the focus of this paper, is religious. Religious pluralism could be defined as “religious diversity or heterogeneity” (Yaacob 2013:166). In this context, pluralism is the recognition of multiple religious groups believed to co-exist harmoniously, including the members of these different religions also have harmonious co-existence. Religious pluralism also has an ecumenical dimension. Ecumenical pluralism is the situation where people of different religious persuasions engage in an informative dialogue to learn from each other with no intention or attempt to convince, correct, or convict each other about preferred religious beliefs. A third path of religious pluralism is accepting the beliefs taught by religions other than one’s own as valid, but not necessarily true (166).

According to Paul Tillich, religious pluralism is the co-existence of a large number of religious groups in what may be considered a secular society (1963:12). Conflicting explanations have been given to the rise of religious pluralism. One school of thought places the foundation of this movement on postmodernism, a philosophical worldview that denies “absolutes, fixed certainties or foundations,” but delights in pluralism and divergence (McGrath 1992:363). This has been attributed to the collapse of the enlightenment idea of discovering universal knowledge through the power of reason (368).

Many have been driven to relativism by the collapse of the Enlightenment’s confidence in the power of reason to provide foundations for our truth-claims and to achieve finality in our search for truth in the various disciplines. Much of the distress concerning pluralism and relativism which is voiced today springs from a crisis in the secular mentality of modern western culture, not from a crisis in Christianity itself. (Allen 1989:9)

On the other hand, John Hick, a strong proponent of religious

pluralism, argues that religious pluralism could also be a reaction to two Christian ideas of salvation. The first is exclusivism; the belief that the singular and true faith leading to salvation is Christianity. The other idea is inclusivism. This view believes that “salvation for anyone depends solely on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but on the other hand that this salvation is available not only to Christians but in principle to all human beings. Thus non-Christians can be included within the sphere of Christian salvation” (2005).

This proposition was however, objected to by proponents of other religions who view the position as disparaging other religions, therefore they insist that every religion is valid. And as Rumi puts it: “*The lamps are different but the Light is the same; it comes from beyond*” (Rumi 1950:166, emphasis mine). In other words, religious pluralists would argue that every religion originates from God, leads to him, and could offer salvation; although the concept of salvation may differ from one religion to another.

The central tenet of religious pluralism is that all religions are valid pathways to a relationship with deity, whatever that deity may be. Thus, no religion has a monopoly on truth or the way leading to salvation. Truth is merely a perception and pluralism seeks to eliminate the attitude of triumphalism of one religion over another and even rejects the idea of denominational triumphalism among Christian denominations. Consequently, proponents of religious pluralism assert that its views engender stability rather than chaos in society. Writing on this in the context of America, Diana Eck posits:

Pluralism takes the reality of difference as its starting point. The challenge of pluralism is not to obliterate or erase difference, nor to smooth out differences under a universalizing canopy, but rather to discover ways of living, connecting, relating, arguing, and disagreeing in a society of differences. This is no small challenge, given the fact that some of the most contentious differences are within religious communities and even within particular sectarian or denominational movements. (2007:745)

Following this line of thought in the context of Africa, those supporting religious pluralism may argue that affirming the presence of African Religions—the religious experience indigenous to the continent—alongside the two religions introduced by missionaries—Christianity from the West and Islam from the East with their various theological propositions—contribute to stability because pluralism promotes religious tolerance. Further along this pathway of thought, the various forms of Christian identity in Africa, African Initiated Churches (AICs), the Orthodox, Pentecostal, rather than contending and competing for

adherents, have legitimate existences and mission since each has truth and even salvation in its religious traditions and paths. This could lead to a kind of ecumenism emphasizing cooperation, and service and fewer doctrinal or worldview distinctions.

In the context of Africa, however, the most noticeable drawback with religious pluralism is how anyone or each of the multiple expressions of faith can claim to profess the truth about a higher power with such diversity. Such a situation can lead to religious cynicism if not outright agnosticism. A religious cafeteria or market place of religious ideas with freedom of choice cannot but offer unbelief and weaken convictions. This kind of religious environment negates self-sacrifice, personal piety, and devotion. Religious pluralism is thus a recipe for liberal spirituality and no absolutes.

Postmodernism

It is generally agreed by scholars that postmodernism arose from the ashes of modernism, an era which gave prominence to reason and which hypothesizes that absolute knowledge could be gained through the human mind, and that this would consequently enhance intrinsic goodness (Goncalves 2005:22, 23). Paul Hiebert identifies five possible reasons for the rise of postmodernism: (1) the loss of faith in the Enlightenment after World War I, (2) the success of the modern era, (3) the critique of modernity's hermeneutics of suspicion which questioned "all traditional ideologies" and sought "for certain, universal truths based on positivism," (4) modernity's weak emphasis on ethics and the purpose of knowledge that modernity promoted; and (5) the changes in modernity itself leading to uncertainty and insecurity (2008:212–217). The postmodern worldview could be described as "an intellectual mood, a set of contemporary cultural expressions that challenge the main beliefs, values, and principles of the modern worldview" and indicates "the end of a single, universal, all-encompassing worldview" (Gonclaves 2005:82, 84). Alister McGrath describes it this way:

Postmodernism . . . is generally taken to be something of a cultural sensibility without absolutes, fixed certainties or foundations, which takes delight in pluralism and divergence, and which aims to think through the radical situatedness of all human thought. Postmodernity is a vague and ill-defined notion, which perhaps could be described as the general intellectual outlook arising after the collapse of modernity. (1992:363)

However, Scott Moore considers "postmodernism as a 'turn' rather

than as an epoch or era . . . a modern problem and a modern phenomenon" (1996:133). He argues that "postmodernity is not what comes after modernity falls away, but it is that turn in which modernity's assumptions have been problematized and the continuity of our confidence has been called into question" (137). In the view of Arnold Toynbee, the postmodern era is the fourth and final phase of Western history where "consciousness is adrift, unable to anchor itself to any universal ground of justice, truth, or reason on which the ideals of modernity had been founded in the past. Consciousness itself is thus decentered" (1956:211–215). Postmodernism "rejects modernity's assumption of its own superiority and its rejection of other cultures as primitive. It affirms the worth of cultures, and emphasizes tolerance and cognitive and moral relativism" (Hiebert 2008:214). Certain features characterize postmodernism. Some of these are summarized in the following section.

Characteristics of Postmodernism

Relativity of Truth

The postmodern view of truth is that of relativity. It argues that "truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth" (Foucault 2006:379). "Postmoderns believe that not only our specific beliefs but also our understanding of truth itself is rooted in the community in which we participate. . . . And since there are many human communities, there are necessarily many different truths" (Grenz 1996:14). Similarly, "all-encompassing stories are replaced by a respect for differences and a celebration of the local and particular at the expense of the universal" (Gonclaves 2005:116), therefore, it is "difficult to sort into the true and false, the meaningful and meaningless, the consequential and trivial" (Groothuis 2000:54, 57). Thus "all pre-existing 'foundations' of epistemology have been shown to be unreliable" (Giddens 1990:46). Consequently, the place, if any, of an objective universal worldview is minimized. Feelings, emotions, and intuition, rather than reason alone are also promoted as valid sources of truth (Grenz 1996:7). Discussion about truth therefore centers on contending interpretations rather than uncovering objective truth which do not exist (Gonclaves 2005:101). In other words, truth is community-determined and conditioned by the peculiar and unique experiences of each community. Consequently, for postmodernists no one can set the boundaries of behavior, and spiritual authority is inconsequential since truth is only community-determined. It then follows also that spirituality is relative and cannot be measured by any universal values.

Denial of Metanarratives

Extending from the postmodern perspective and its relativizing of truth is the disbelief in and undoing of metanarratives. As Michel Foucault puts it “each society has its regime of truth” (2006:379). There is no “place of objective truth, local narratives that work for a particular community are accepted as truth. Truth is now viewed only as a matter of interpretation and not what is real or true.” (Goncalves 2005:189). This situation implies that all religions propose narratives that are useful to human existence and no one religion can lay claim to universal or absolute explanation of reality (104, 105). Consequently, since truth is not revealed but society-oriented the definitions of truth among societies vary and such truths only serve the purpose of a particular society. Drawing from this pattern of thought in the context of Africa, and ATR, which are indigenous to the people, cannot be relegated behind Christianity, which may be considered foreign and distanced and may be perceived as incapable of addressing the people’s worldview.

Rejection of Authority and Ecclesia Alignment

Arising from the relativism of truth and dismissal of metanarratives is the “rejection of authority” and in this case God, since in his absence, no one universal truth exists (Deneault 2003:4). This is a major characteristic of relativism, since no one can declare the absolute truth in the absence of God. Accordingly, religious truth is seen as a “special kind of truth and not an eternal and perfect representation of cosmic reality” (Anderson 1990:44). Postmodernists think biblical Christianity is arrogant and is so presented by those who imagine it to be superior to all other religions. Accordingly for the postmodernists, “their own personal insights and views are more important than those of organized religion” (Gosnell 1995:377), since “all convictions about values have equal validity, which says in effect that no convictions about values have any validity” (Brown 1990:279). This allows postmoderns to attempt “to fulfill their spiritual needs through any kind of religion” (Gonclaves 2005:193), preferring non-institutionalized religion to organized, mainstream religions. (Gosnell 1995:377). In this situation, church attendance is not synonymous with good Christian values (377). There is autonomy of belief rather than spiritual dependence. This makes Christianity just one of the options and not the only option for spiritual development and loyalty.

Close to this concept of postmodernism is the argument that texts have multiple interpretations. This is called the New Criticism (Anderson 1990:80). Meanings are found in the interaction between the text and reader.

Any reader can understand a text through what is called “participative dialogue” (Gosnell 1995:376). The intent of the author is less significant to the interpretation of the reader. These features of postmodernism lead to worldview shifts, making values relative; these in turn affect spiritual loyalties and commitments. This could be summed up as follows:

The new model reflects a number of postmodern tenets: downplay of absolutes; distrust of transcendence; preference for “dynamic change” over “static truth”; desire for religious pluralism so that people of other cultures and religions are saved; the downplay of God’s authority over us; the tone of tolerance, warm sentiments, and pop psychology. For all of its nice thoughts, however, megashift theology strikes at the foundation of any faith that can call itself evangelical – the good news that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins and to offer the free gift of salvation. At stake is the gospel itself. (Veith 1994:214, 215)

Hence, it could be concluded that “postmodernity distrusts the universal totalizing nature of modern thought and seeks fragmentation, indeterminacy, and pragmatism as liberating forces against the tyranny of modernity” (Hiebert 2008:215).

Dual Allegiance

The third religious orientation that is discussed in this article as it relates to the development of biblical spirituality is dual allegiance. This could be defined as the response by most Christians in Africa to the perceived inadequacy of Christianity to address their daily challenges of defeat, emptiness and helplessness in the face of sickness, poverty, uncertainty, and even hostility from demons and other malevolent forces, by resorting to pre-Christian practices of depending on rituals, persons and institutions such as sacrifices, priests, diviners, and shrines that promise wholeness from the unpleasant situations.

Dual allegiance is a state of mind that is subsequently played out in practical ways. It can be described as the phenomenon whereby a person demonstrates loyalty and dependence on the Christian God as well as on non-Christian African deities. It is difficult to differentiate dual allegiance from syncretism. It appears that dual allegiance leads to syncretistic activities and vice versa, . . . dual allegiance constitutes an internal or psychological system of inconsistencies, doubts, and fears that eventually become manifest in the lives of the religion’s adherents. (Dosunmu 2010:32)

Biblically, dual allegiance in the Old Testament seems to have resulted

mainly from desperation for answers to uncertainties and self-preservation. All the key manifestations of dual allegiance in the Old Testament—the building and worship of the golden calf in the wilderness (Exod 32:1–9, Saul’s night visit to the witch of Endor to consult a familiar spirit (1 Sam 28:24), the contest of Elijah with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:16–39), Jeroboam’s erection and worship of golden calves in Dan and Bethel (1 Kgs 12:25–13:3), the shrine prostitution (1 Kgs 14:24), and human sacrifices and witchcraft (2 Kgs 17:16–17)—may be understood from these perspectives. The New Testament references to possible dual allegiances (e.g., 1 Cor 10:20; 2 Cor 11:13–15; Gal 1:6–9; Col 2:8–23) may have arisen from the tension of the New Testament Christian communities experience in reconciling their new faith with present realities.

Dosunmu (2010:36) and consistent with Paul G. Hiebert (2009:407–414) attributes dual allegiance to external causes such as “the flaw of the excluded middle, failure to contextualize, failures in the three essential Christian encounters—allegiance, truth, and power encounters.” These situations could be ascribed to the conflicting worldviews of early foreign missionaries and the recipients of the gospel, the attitude of the missionaries to the culture of the receivers, which led to cultural, intellectual, and spiritual voids and their general state of unpreparedness to address these voids (Bauer 2007:2–4). In terms of inadequate responses to cultural voids, the inability or unwillingness to contextualize may lead to dual allegiance.

When we fail to contextualize, we run a much greater risk of establishing weak churches whose members will turn to non-Christian syncretistic explanations, follow non-biblical lifestyles, and engage in magical rituals. This is because a non-contextualized Christianity seldom engages people at the level of their deepest needs and aspirations, and so we end up with what Jesuit Jaime Bulatao in the Philippines calls a “split level” Christianity. When this happens, Christianity appears to provide answers to some of life’s questions such as one’s ultimate destiny, eternal salvation, etc., but the concerns of everyday life such as why tragedy strikes, why one’s garden dries up, etc., do not receive a Christian answer, so people return to animistic explanations for dealing with everyday problems. (Whiteman 2005:60)

In terms of the three essential Christian encounters—allegiance, truth, and power—when the allegiance and commitment required of new converts is minimized, essential truths are not emphasized for the sake of numbers, and faith is not well-established to encounter the challenges of demonic powers, the tendency is a weak faith which may result in seeking alternative powers to respond to life challenges and fulfill aspirations. Thus, the description that “deeply committed Christians faithfully attend

church services and pray to God in times of need, but feel compelled during the week to go to a local shaman [native doctor] for healing, a diviner for guidance, and an exorcist for deliverance from spirit oppression” (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno 1999:15), could describe the experiences of many Christians in Africa.

Influencing Receptor Factors of Dual Allegiance in Africa

Receptor causes of dual allegiance refer to the culture and worldview of a recipient involved in a new religion. In this case, it is the African worldview and explanations given to the relationships between life experiences and the external forces that may continue to influence those who become a Christian. It may also include how people interpret social realities. In this vein, Onongha identifies some factors that influence dual allegiance in Africa. The first of these factors is “needs” (2011:5–7) which is defined as “good harvest, flourishing business, success in examinations, good luck, victory, rain for crops, protection against accident, protection from danger, protection against forces of evil, and healing” (Dopamu 2003:444). A second factor is the animistic belief of the traditional African worldview that blames spirits for every misfortune, accident or trouble, and for any unexplainable event. The spirits may be ancestors who are believed to be capable of controlling the fate of the living (Akpa, Nwaomah, and Umahi 2013:146) and who are believed capable to cause diseases, misfortune, epidemics, and sicknesses. An additional factor influencing dual allegiance is the uncertainty about the future, the unknown, evil, failure, shame, loss, and death. These uncertainties are a major contributing motivator for the search for power, protection, and prosperity.

A fourth factor is the magical worldview of the African. This manifests itself in the belief that people can manipulate or somehow influence nature to favor them in times of misfortunes or in their search of prosperity. Persons who are believed to have control over nature or are able to influence the future are sought after and venerated. Finally, the craze for higher social status is another factor. Since an advanced and prosperous status is considered an advantage, irrespective of how they are attained, dual allegiance offers a platform for this societal and economic ascendancy.

Manifestations of Dual Allegiance in Africa

Dual Allegiance manifests itself in several forms in Africa. One way is the use of objects such as mystic seals, talismans, charms, magic necklaces, bangles, wristwatches, anointed pens, power rings, colored candles, magic mirrors, incense; rings for success, good luck and true love oils,

life protection oils, exam success oils, attraction oils, holy waters, beauty powders, witch expellers, bath mixtures, olive oil, powder, perfume, and ritual bathing. The ritual of anointing in some Christian circles also tends towards dualism (Nwaomah 2009:62, 63; Nwaomah 2012a). The use of these objects and rituals is predicated on the African worldview of incessant confrontation between humanity and the spirit world and the efficacy and/or mediatory roles assigned to rituals to appease or conquer the spirits. These objects and rituals may assist in the realization of their desires. Another possible manifestation of dual allegiance is the new prophetism in African Christianity, which sometimes includes consulting spirit mediums (Deke 2015:11), which is well established and practiced in ATR where it operates through mediums, priests, and diviners. Whereas priests/priestesses and mediums may provide information orally under spirit possession, diviners are able to foretell events by means of their divin-ing skills and objects" (Quayesi-Amakye 2013). This is one of the reasons why the church in Africa is unable "to differentiate between true prophets and false prophets, [since] it places much emphasis on the spoken word without evaluating the source" (Deke 2015:11). Consequently, "soothsaying, divination, sorcerers, fortune telling and spirit guides have been accepted and embraced in African theology under the banner of prophecy and faith healing" (12). Therefore, Africa is inundated with many claiming to hold a prophetic office. And the prophetic movement has gained much acceptance and influenced many Christians in Africa today because the prophetic intermediaries claim they do so in the name of God. However, it seems much of this movement is syncretistic in nature because it negates biblical authority and spirituality.

Pluralism, Postmodernism, Dual Allegiance, and Biblical Spirituality

The quest to capture the meaning of spirituality has been a tortuous one in the history of its study. This difficulty arises from the fact that this term is not exclusive in its usage. In beginning the discussion, it might be appropriate to concur with Downey (1999:14) that spirituality could mean the conviction that reality transcends the empirical realm and human alienation and fragmentation can be healed by connection with the transcendent realm. The "transcendent realm" is however subjective, depending on personal and religious perceptions. Thus "spirituality" has been defined as "the meaning and purpose [the] individual sees in life but does not define in religious terms . . . opening to the person's inner self and to the transcendent, an inner force impacting the way a person thinks and lives, . . . the search for existential meaning in a life experience" (Samson

2003:334). It could also refer to the “affective, practical and transformative side of religion” (Spohn 2003:255). If spirituality is understood as “the lived practice of faith in the concrete, everyday experiences of our lives, then culture has an important impact on spirituality” (Muldoon 2005:88). While the definitions above may differ, one thread that runs through them is the search for meaning and the desire to have an experiential knowledge of the sacred.

T. R. Albin distinguishes Christian spirituality from all other types in the following ways:

Christian spirituality involves the relationship between the whole person and a holy God, who reveals himself through both testaments—and supremely in the person of his unique Son, Jesus Christ. . . . The test of Christian spirituality is conformity of heart and life to the confession and character of Jesus as Lord. . . . The guarantee of Christian spirituality is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer resulting in conformity to God’s will. (1988:757)

The Nature of Christian Spirituality

J. M. Houston has identified six fundamental elements of Christian spirituality worth mentioning (1984:1047). Some of these are discussed as they relate to this investigation.

First, Christian spirituality is not synonymous with asceticism, the practice of self-abandonment, and contempt for the material world. Christians must acknowledge that God has created everything and appointed some of his creation for the nourishment of human life. It is therefore imperative for them to appropriate to themselves all that God approves of but refrain from such that may cause harm and fracture their relationship with him. This seems to be the principle enunciated by Paul in his warning to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 10:23, 31; Rom 12:1).

Next, Christian spirituality is also Christocentric. It was customary for Paul to describe the life of a believer as a life lived “in Christ.” This concept emphasizes the union the Christian is expected to have with Christ (see Gal 2:20). God’s original purpose in making humankind in his image (Gen 1:26–28) is reinterpreted by the redemption motif as the need to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8:29).

Further, Christian spirituality involves the outworking of the grace of God in the life of a person, from the time of conversion to the termination of a person’s earthly existence. This process requires a constant growth and maturity in Christ-like life. This life entails community and fellowship (Eph 4:15–16), a life of prayer (Matt 6:5–15; 1 Thess 5:17), a sense of the eternal dimension in all aspects of one’s existence (Gen 50:19–20;

Rom 8:28), an intense awareness of life lived in the present before God (Matt 6:34), and a life that produces self-control (Gal 5:22–23).

Finally, Christian spirituality engenders fellowship. As social beings our spirituality is also tested by the social harmony it creates. No believer is an island. Christians are called to season the community they find themselves living in (Acts 2:42). For this seasoning to be effective it must be done with a sense of sobriety and love and excludes human characteristics and influences that negate godliness

However, Schneiders argues that “not all Christian spiritualities . . . are equally biblical” (2002:135). This may refer to the peculiarities of various Christian traditions and how they impact the spirituality of their adherents. It is then possible to agree with Peter Adam that “biblical spirituality could mean using the Bible as a resource for spirituality, or could refer to that spirituality which the Bible commends and that results from using the Bible as a guide to spirituality” (2004:19). This type of spirituality recognizes God’s eternal power and greatness, appropriates personal encouragement, support, rebuke, and correction that Christian fellowship provides, and regards the Bible as central to every areas of life (19). It is the spirituality that “designates a pattern of Christian life deeply imbued with the spirituality (ies) of the Bible. . . . An integrated contemporary spirituality that is markedly biblical in character” (19). Some elements of this type of spirituality include biblical devotional practices such as prayer, reading and meditating on God’s Word, personal and corporate worship, fasting, and stewardship. It also recognizes the role service plays in the development of a Christian’s spiritual life, the role of community, and awareness of the incompleteness of a person’s present relationship with God, thus heightening the sense of eschatology and the imminent return of Christ (Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary 2012:15).

In the light of the discussion above, it could be concluded that biblical spirituality is that spirituality that recognizes and upholds the centrality of the Bible. It is the spirituality that accepts biblical principles and examples to saturate one’s devotional practices, to guides personal and corporate worship, and is central to other aspects of Christian living such as fasting, stewardship, and service. This spirituality also admits the supreme authority of the Creator God and avows the universality of biblical truths and values.

However Pluralism and Postmodernism offer a cafeteria of truth and moral value. They advocate that no one religion is supreme, promote the rejection of universal value systems and truth leading to religious skepticisms. Postmodernism argues that the meaning people give their experiences in a given context is what determine their lives and should shape

their spiritual identities. Dual Allegiance on the other hand, searches for answers to the questions of life in multi-religions. These religious philosophies and practices confront Christianity's claim that it is the only way to salvation and questions its adequacy for living and salvation. Consequently, this kind of religious environment minimizes biblical Christianity and "raise[s] deep questions about Christology, soteriology, worship, morality, ecclesiology, and a host of other issues. [And] the ways in which we answer these questions will certainly have an impact on our spirituality" (Muldoon 2005:89). This paper therefore makes three recommendations for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa that may assist its members in establishing faith and helping Adventist members become equipped to address the threat pluralism, postmodernism, and dual allegiance poses to the development of biblical spirituality.

Recommendations

Curriculum Issues

The first step towards mitigating the threat pluralism, postmodernism, and dual allegiance poses to the development of biblical spirituality is the need to include the study of these ideologies in theological and ministerial curriculums in Africa. This seems to be largely lacking in most ministerial and theological curriculums on the continent as was revealed in the consultative meeting on Ministerial and Theological Education held early in 2016 in Nairobi. Where such teaching does exist, there is a need to deepen its content and provide appropriate teaching and experiences in theological and ministerial education. This step will enhance pastoral and ministerial skills as they minister to members who daily face these challenges.

Church Bible Conferences

The present generation is daily being bombarded by ideologies that question the distinctiveness of biblical faith and spirituality, especially as understood and practiced by the Adventist Church. Therefore, it is important for ministerial and ecclesiastical leaders to work with theological educators to organize symposiums at the grassroots level, such as in local conferences and unions. These local Bible conferences should allow discussion of the issues raised by the various approaches to spirituality and should build the capacity of pastors and laity to better understand the differences between false spiritualities and biblical spirituality.

Re-evaluation of Evangelism and Membership Strategies

A third recommendation in ameliorating the threat pluralism, post-modernism, and dual allegiance pose to the development of biblical Spirituality is the need to re-evaluate evangelism and membership retention strategies in Africa. Studies indicate that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa is very active in evangelism (Nwaomah and Nwaomah 2016:237–253). This is further buttressed by the recent huge baptism of about 100,000 people in Rwanda. But the challenge of nurture and discipleship remain. Most new members are not adequately transitioned from their pre-Christina worldview and stabilized in the Christian faith. Such inadequate post-baptismal care often exposes them to challenges and aspirations that could lead them to seek answers outside of biblical faith and practice. As I have argued elsewhere,

some of the foundational biblical truths believed, practiced and taught by Adventists to strengthen and establish the converts can hardly be properly taught and understood within the period of outreach, no matter how long the outreach may be . . . [and] a large number of these new converts may still be struggling with pagan influences, pressures from the society, and even threats to their lives from former affiliations, both family and religious. (Nwaomah 2012b:118)

It might be well to heed the counsel of Jim Cress who argues: “*The product of evangelism must be disciples, not decisions.* Failure to recognize this is a failure to fulfill the great commission through which Jesus sent His disciples into the entire world to make disciples of all people, teaching them to observe all things He had commanded” (2000:16, emphasis mine).

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