

What to read about **Faith and under-development** *In Africa*



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WHAT TO READ ABOUT FAITH AND UNDER-DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA?

The central issue of this topic is to answer the following questions: Is the Gospel the underlying cause of underdevelopment in African societies? Does the Bible contain teachings that can encourage the production of goods and services and the organization and management of resources in African society?

To provide the Truth regarding these spiritual and socio-economic concerns, it is good to proceed first of all by circumscribing, without claiming to bring a doctrinal definition, the concepts accompanying this subject, and bring out the possible interference or influence between these concepts, and finally to draw the appropriate conclusions.

These concepts are FAITH and DEVELOPMENT:

FAITH is simply an act of spirituality, based on a belief in an invisible 'Being' whose essence is prior to and superior to nature, and to whom the creation of the world is generally attributed. Without exception, this 'spiritual' aspect of human life can be found in all known human communities.

DEVELOPMENT, on the other hand, is a "socio-economic" aspect of man's life, related to the improvement of his activity of know-how, production of useful goods and services, and distribution and exchange of goods within a community or between different communities.

In fact, these two aspects of human life - spiritual and physical -

are not in opposition but rather complement each other. Both in societies touted as materially and economically "prosperous" and in societies described as underdeveloped, man always resorts to belief in or adherence to a movement or order of immaterial activity, which he proudly gives terminologies including philosophy, current of thought, esoteric order, metaphysics, meditation, religion, animism, magic, ancestor worship, etc.". Often, in all these forms of society, man boasts that he derives his "general" well-being from this immaterial activity.

The problem of lack of material comfort, insufficiency, and/or poor management and distribution of resources within African communities is a reality that must be elucidated by factors other than FAITH per se, which is pointed out as the cause. Let us recall that FAITH is commonly referred to as evangelism, church, or religion. In this article, we will use both terms interchangeably to remain in the sense that the common language attributes to them: Faith.

If religion really is a vector of underdevelopment, the United States of America, Switzerland, and other Western countries, which practice the Christian religion, use the Bible to swear oaths and put Christian symbols on their emblems, could have been the poorest countries, but it is not the case. On the contrary, these countries are economically, infrastructural, and technologically advanced.

While we're on the subject of the abuse of religion in Africa, we can't ignore the fact that all human activity is not without its mistakes and that sometimes things

go wrong, as was the case with the few colonialists who used the Bible to exploit the African people.

Apart from the case of these deceitful colonialists, the Word was announced according to God's plans which says, "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

Thus, Christian FAITH cannot be, as such, a contributing factor to underdevelopment. It is not because the African man devotes himself to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, that he becomes the seeds bearer of underdevelopment; on the contrary, spiritual activity is the bearer of virtues and superior values capable of bringing man to his full potential, as we shall see a little later in this article.

But what happens in most cases? When one fails to succeed in his endeavours or what he has been taught in school as "objectively" effective techniques or ways to develop himself, he may easily use religion as a refuge of consolation. In this case, and this often happens, it is not religion that has led Man to failure, it is in fact the religion that has welcomed Man who has already failed by using his efforts.

It is the constraints encountered in the community, constraints other than religious ones, which have caused him to fail, because religion will not reject people in distress, whom society has clumsily led to failure and disappointment, and who have chosen to embrace religion. Not only does religion welcome people in distress, but it also and above all teaches high moral standards founded on respect for values and principles based on love, equality, the general interest, selflessness, sobriety, moderation, sharing, respect for

humanity, physical integrity, and human life. It should be noted that the evangelical mission in many cases was coupled with literacy activities, as well as education and vocational training programmes for men.

Education in Africa has raised the intellectual level of Africans to the point where they are now able to compete with Westerners in science, education, and the professions. In addition, the reality of African society shows that the first literates, intellectuals, researchers, and managers of public administration and basic social services came, for the most part, from Catholic and Protestant schools and higher education institutions.

Furthermore, the preaching of the Gospel has been also accompanied by the establishment of healthcare institutions, mental health, social rehabilitation centres, workshops, factories, and businesses that produce and sell necessities. All these educational, instructional, social stabilization and production activities are recommended for the development of any modern community, and the Church has been involved in them in Africa.

As far as the origins of religions are concerned, it should be noted that the religions introduced into Africa by Westerners are not of Western origin, but rather of Eastern origin for the most part. The West has also inherited these religions through migratory movements and Eastern influence. However, these religions, which are alien to Western man, have not held back the development of the Western world. Western man has accepted these religions and integrated them

effectively into his way of life while maintaining and continuing to develop. This leads us, once again, to state that FAITH is not in itself a vector of underdevelopment!

It is also worth noting that crucial subjects such as organisation, planning, forecasting, management, and the redistribution of resources and goods, as well as the integral part of the Bible's teaching.

Here are a few concrete biblical examples:

- Divine wisdom reflected in Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream about the 7 fat cows and 7 lean cows (lesson: planning). Genesis 41:1-32;
- When Israel was to harvest the manna, God commanded them to harvest enough for two days every Sabbath eve, to cover the need for food on the Sabbath as well (lesson: storage). Exodus 16:29;
- On the day when Jesus miraculously multiplied the loaves and fed the people, he ordered his disciples to keep the remaining loaves once everyone was full and did not allow them to throw them away (lesson: good management of possessions). John 6, 12-13;
- Even though the Disciples (Apostles) of Jesus had seen Jesus perform miracles and feed thousands of people, they did not refrain from organizing a common fund and stewardship to meet daily needs (lesson: organization and forecasting). John 13:29;
- For neither was anyone needy among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and they laid them down at the apostles' feet. And distribution was made to every man according as he had need." (Lesson: contribution, management, and distribution of

resources). Acts 4:34-35.

- If anyone does not want to work, let him not eat either (lesson: a sense of work and responsibility).

2 Thessalonians 3: 7-12;

- Man is advised to observe how the provider works and builds reserve supply (lesson: conscience, dedication to work, and the production of wealth). Proverbs 6:6-11.

These biblical passages are not exhaustive; individual reading will help us discover more.

To conclude this article, please delve deep into the issue of underdevelopment in Africa, without seeking to associate it solely with the Faith. Reducing the issue of underdevelopment in Africa to the "Christian faith" as a foreign and imposed religion is an approach deliberately designed to prevent the African elite from addressing the real causes of the continent's underdevelopment status.

This article is aimed at 'revealing' to the African people that the Christian faith is not the cause of their underdevelopment, as experienced, observed, or declared by certain monitoring bodies. It is intending to explain the causes of the social and economic crisis in Africa or to provide solutions. The African elite and researchers are called upon to consider this fundamental question. In our opinion, this article may be considered the first step, which marks out the path of reflection, and leaves it to those interested in the question to dig deeper.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that the African elite, who are responsible for organizing and leading communities at all levels,

borrow from the Bible the teachings on love, equality, general interest, selflessness, sobriety, moderation, sharing, respect for humanity, physical integrity, and for human life. We are convinced that these values drawn from Christian teachings are "carriers" of ways out because they have the potential and the power to enable African men to establish a strong national community, based on solidarity.