

Poor God!

Infecting His Fruits

Sometimes I feel sorry for God and I feel like saying, “Poor God!” But, unlike the rest of us, He is supreme and therefore unruffled by rampant misrepresentations of His essence.

Perhaps you’ve heard of those crusade in Lagos, Nigeria’s teeming commercial capital, where up to 300,000 people at a time are reported to give their lives to Christ. But when you drive around Lagos and witness the chaos of this city, you wonder where all these “born-again” are hiding. In developing countries like Ghana and Kenya, a number of highways are lined with large billboards announcing the greatness of various churches and their pastors. The real question is, what about the greatness of these countries? In some instances, these billboards eclipse posters mounted by aspiring politicians. This is a very rare phenomenon in advanced countries, and for obvious reasons.

The truth is that a compelling Christian presence in any society is evident in the transformations and development within that society, and not what billboards proclaim. I like the biblical principle that equates specific “fruits” with the nature of ongoing progress. These fruits serve as evidence of Christian growth, whether they are rotten, infected, ripe or nutritious. Interestingly, the bible instructs us to be “fruitful and multiply.” While some would restrict *fruitful* to procreation, its broader meaning is apparent in the connotations associated with its opposite meaning; that is, *fruitless*—unproductive, ineffective, unsuccessful, unrewarding, wasted, useless, unprolific and futile. Essentially, dancing wildly in church, speaking in tongues, claiming to have won 300,000 souls for Christ or mounting spectacular billboards about the magnitude of a church or pastor all amount to nothing! The real evidence of the impact of Christianity can be found in the fruits that are produced, nothing else. These fruits are not to be found in church buildings, but in the real church, which is the way of life of those who make up the body of believers. They will be found in how we manage our schools, hospitals and businesses. They will be found in how we drive our cars and how we relate to other people, regardless of class, background or lifestyle. They will be found in our infrastructure and how we run our governments. They will be found in our quality of life and the wealth of our overall existence.

Screaming “God” is no longer fashionable; it is actually becoming obsolete, irritating and even suspect. I know non-Christians who have demonstrated the “art” of “speaking in tongues” while others can croon every popular gospel song. When we elect a new

president or governor, he or she, in what has become a cynical ritual, swears utmost diligence, usually with a hand on a religious book. There is the joke about Nigerian's first sharing an opening prayer when they gather to strategize on how to defraud an office or bank. But it isn't a joke that many "419" emails designed to rip-off hapless readers are often preceded by a holy title: "Holy Ghost has sent me to you"; "Please use these funds to do the work of Christ"; "You are chosen by God for this task...." Essentially, all of the above evocations of God and the sacred, in spite of the different scenarios, are, as in many of our churches, little more than a theatrical expression of slobbering, religious drivel!

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