

A Response by Dan Brewster to Bishop Joshua H.K. Banda's Paper:

**Christian Mission, state Polity and International Politics from the Perspective on an AIDS
Activist in the Global South: Implications for Church Action.**

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I am grateful to Bishop Banda for his courage in speaking out at the UNGASS meetings and for raising this matter in his paper for our consideration at this INFEMIT gathering. And I appreciate his leadership your church and for the 'Lazarus Project' which addresses the topic raised in this paper.

I am not qualified to respond on this topic. I did spend most of 16 years in Africa, but that was, as they say here in Asia, in a 'previous' life. This year I passed 16 years living in Asia, so any African awareness credentials I might have brought to the table are well past their expiry date. But I am delighted to 'engage' with this topic, if only to be able to ramble about an issue which troubles me a great deal.

Banda limits his consideration of the sexuality debate to how it relates to state polity in the context of what he has termed the new human rights crusade, whose topical priority practically appears to boil down to 'sexual orientation' and other 'rights issues now inextricably tied to donor aid, and a new 'scramble for Africa.' Banda notes that it is clear that the human rights agenda appears to be merely adding impetus to a much bigger global agenda.

I will seek to 'engage' mostly with these same issues, but perhaps also a bit of that larger global agenda and a different perspective.

Economic and 'Sexual' Neo-Colonialism

"We are not just talking about it. We are also saying that British aid should have more strings attached." David Cameron (British Prime Minister) 'threatening' to tie future economic aid to changes in official policies towards homosexuality:

Bishop Banda observes that this kind of pressure is common amongst Western nations, UN agencies and Aid organizations, and that it "is likely go on for a long time in Africa for as long as African States are hugely reliant on donor aid." Banda does not touch on *why* so many nations in Africa are still hugely reliant on donor aid, (which I know he could have done very astutely), so I will not comment extensively on this matter. However, I can't let pass the troubling question of 'why African states are *still* hugely reliant on donor aid. It is *way* beyond the scope of this

response and of my feeble intellect to solve this problem. But some things are clear. Though external factors such as colonialism, the slave trade and now global trade imbalances have taken their toll on Africa, the biggest obstacles to Africa are internal. There is no question that African leaders have exercised dominion over the political structures, but have not been stewards of the resources entrusted to them.

Africa was blessed by being a recipient of the 'gospel' as far back as OT times, and more recently by a multitude of very selfless missionaries. However, it is also true that in spite of the amazingly sacrificial contributions of those (mostly Western) missionaries, they often *underserved* their African hosts. For their Gospel often focused narrowly only on 'conversion. In the many years that the Church has been present in Africa, personal piety was often valued over social responsibility. Discipleship and development were divorced or compartmentalized. The Gospel was not presented as a totally encompassing life view capable of *renewing minds* as the Apostle Paul exhorted in Romans 12:1,2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5.

That truncated Gospel meant that the Church was often not the 'salt and light' that it could/should have been across the African continent. It also meant that untold millions were left in poverty and suffering without the transformational Truths that can transform peoples and nations. Indeed, much of the global efforts and the obscene amounts of money thrown at the 'poverty issues' have done nothing to improve the lives of most of the peoples. It has rather contributed to an economic "Neo-Colonialism" which continues to enslave.

My own work has focused on the alleviation of that suffering amongst children, and in those 16 years on the continent, focused on the needs of African children. Thus, I have seen (and been a part of?) that phenomenon about which Zimbabwean theologian Victor Nakah writes:

African childhood has become closely identified with need, a perception strengthened by pictures and stories from all over the continent suggesting that every African child is needy, vulnerable and a victim of various serious threats. The assumption is that Mama Africa cannot nourish, protect and raise her children. This becomes the basis for the multi-billion industry employing tens of thousands of expatriates committed to "save" Africa's children.¹

In fact of course, Africa is blessed with unimaginable abundance. Africa is larger than the US, Europe, India, and China combined. Africa is the richest continent in terms of natural resources. The abundance of Africa is well-known – agriculture, water, minerals, energy, and people. Why it is that Africa must still be so dependent on Aid from foreign donors? Nakah asks 'What it is about us and the times we live in that, in spite of our incredible wealth in natural and human resources, diverse centers of learning, our state of well-being or Shalom remains far less than

¹ Nakah, Victor. "Child Theology: A Challenge to the Seminaries" in *Now and Next: A Compendium of Papers Presented at the Now and Next Theological Conference on Children, Nairobi, Kenya, March 9-12, 2011*. P. 145.

adequate? It is no longer news to read of failed economies or other forms of ‘failed realities’ as in failed homes, failed institutions and on a more serious note, failed dreams and aspirations.”²

Leaving aside the historically truncated gospel and the economic components of the Neo-Colonialism, we focus here on the ‘Sexual Colonialism’ alluded to by Bishop Banda. Banda notes the intense pressure to elevate the highly emotive issues associated with sexual lifestyles and the *new human rights crusade*, that now top the advocacy and policy agenda in many African States. The priority boils down to ‘sexual orientation’ and other ‘rights’ issues, and they are now inextricably tied to donor aid.

Bishop Banda alludes to the high-profile ‘neo-colonialism’ taking place in the political arena in Uganda, which is similar to what he has experienced in Zambia. Stephen Langa, an elder in an influential church in Kampala, and the Executive Director of a Ugandan based family ministry in Uganda, agrees that Africa’s people are experiencing unprecedented pressure to accept anti-family practices, especially sexual perversion and abortion.

As is the case in Zambia, Ugandans also view homosexuality as a sin. African Christians and cultures across the continent abhor homosexuality, African nations are being “arm-twisted” and blackmailed by Western ‘colonial’ powers into accepting it.

“Most African languages do not even have a word for homosexuality! Yet the Obama administration is vigorously pushing its embrace in African communities. Generations after African nations finally rid themselves of political sovereignty by western powers, a new kind of imperialism has risen: sexual colonialism.”³

Langa’s organization has visited hundreds of schools and interviewed and counseled thousands of young people on family and ‘vice’ related issues. He notes that:

“Initially we observed very few incidents of homosexuality/lesbianism among students. Then, beginning about five years ago, we noticed an increase, but did not know what was driving the vice. ... [I]nformation [then] came to light that well-organized pro-homosexual organizations were recruiting Ugandan children into homosexual behaviors by enticing them with financial favors. These groups were trained and funded by international organizations and some Western governments. ... UNICEF published a handbook promoting homosexuality among teens, “Teenager Toolkit”⁴ and circulated it in 30 school districts of Uganda, in complete disregard for the laws of Uganda and the cultural practices which prohibit homosexual behavior.

² Ibid.

³ Resisting Sexual Colonialism: Africans Stand Against 21st Century Imperialists Wanting to Plant the Homosexual Flag, by Stephen Langa <http://darrowmillerandfriends.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/resisting-sexual-colonialism.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill [AHB] presented in the Parliament of Uganda on October 14, 2009 has drawn worldwide attention and provoked intense debate and condemnation, in the international media, sympathetic to homosexuality. The media have often, deliberately misrepresented both the facts and the spirit of the bill, even suggesting that Uganda wanted to “hunt and kill” homosexuals.⁵ A representative from the U.S. Embassy contacted individual members of Parliament who supported the bill and threatened them with denial of American visas!⁶

The Coming Gay Marriage Witch Hunt⁷

Rarely has there been such a rapid and thorough paradigm shift in public opinion as that which has taken place regarding ‘gay rights’ and homosexual marriage. The winds have been blowing in that direction for some time, but now it has become a gale. President Obama opened the flood gates with his flip-flop on the issue, strangely defending both his previous support of traditional marriage and his the ‘evolution’ of his position now supporting same-sex marriage, on his “Christian beliefs.

“I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman,” Obama told CNN while campaigning for the 2008 presidential election. On April 17, 2008, the then-senator called the joining of two people *“a sacred union,”* saying it was important for him to see it that way *as a practicing Christian.* *“I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union. God’s in the mix.”*

Explaining his recent change of heart to ABC’s Robin Roberts in an interview taped on May 9, 2012, President Obama says, “at a certain point I’ve just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married.” Referring to first lady Michelle and himself, he said,

“We are both practicing Christians and obviously this position may be considered to put us at odds with the views of others, but, you know, when we think about our faith, the thing at root that we think about is, not only Christ sacrificing himself on our behalf, but it’s also the Golden Rule, you know, treat others the way you would want to be treated.

Former President Bill Clinton was quick to follow suit, reversing his position on the Defense of Marriage Act, (DOMA, which defined marriage as between members of the opposite sex) – a bill which he himself signed in to law. Prior to signing DOMA, Clinton said, “I have long opposed governmental recognition of same-gender marriages.” However, in a *Washington Post* op-ed, in March, 2013, he writes that the law contradicts the American values of “freedom, equality and

⁵ ibid

⁶ US legislators push for aid cut to Uganda over gays bill (<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-/688334/1128350/-/c3vhijz/-/>). Cited in Langa.

⁷ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/19/the-coming-gay-marriage-witch-hunt.html>

justice above all" "I have come to believe that DOMA is contrary to those principles, and in fact incompatible with our Constitution." DOMA has since been struck down by the US Supreme Court June 26, 2013 - in a 5-4 ruling, which now says it is unconstitutional.

Of course with Bill's reversal, Hillary was then free to change her mind as well, no doubt re-positioning herself 'properly' for her own run for the presidency in 2016. Very soon after's Bill's 'conversion' Hillary had her own 'Damascus Road' (and oh so politically correct and oh so predictable!) experience on the topic. In January 2000, she said, "Marriage has got historic, religious and moral content that goes back to the beginning of time, and I think a marriage is as a marriage has always been, between a man and a woman."

On March 18, 2013, (though denying that she "did it for political reasons"), and also couching her new found conviction in terms of her Christian faith, she said: "Like so many others, my personal views have been shaped over time by people I have known and loved, by my experience representing our nation on the world stage, my devotion to law and human rights and the guiding principles of my faith. Marriage, after all, is a fundamental building block of our society. A great joy, and yes, a great responsibility."

A New Litmus Test

The breathless speed of this 'great reversal' has been astonishing. On the LGBT issues, I have never seen such a rapid cultural shift as in the last 10 years in acceptance of these aberrant lifestyles and their promotion in the schools and other parts of society.

It now appears that the Gay agenda dictates that it is not just any present stance on that agenda which may damn a person in their eyes, but in ever having held any such belief. In the US, 'same sex marriage' (now called 'marriage equality')⁸ has been legalized in many states, and bills legalizing same-sex marriage have been proposed in several other states.

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, an evangelical think tank and lobbying organization, railed against what he called "The New McCarthyism,"⁹ which "would force every corporate leader, university official, public contractor, or media figure to answer a question:

⁸ Bishop Banda writes about the reality behind the re-definition of Human Rights. The so-called GLBT movement are very good at redefining the words associated with homosexuality to be more euphemistic, neutral and emotional, and less graphic, offensive, and threatening. There's even a GLBT activist organization within the media ranks called the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association which has developed a "stylebook" of preferred terms and usage for the media to follow as they write their stories. (<http://nlgja.org/files/NLGJASstylebook0712.pdf>)

⁹ Tony Perkins speaking to The Daily Beast between sessions of the Republican Leadership Conference, on June 19, 2014.

'Are you now or have you ever been involved in an effort to preserve marriage as the union of a man and a woman?'"¹⁰

This New McCarthyism demands, 'Do you now think or have you ever thought that marriage should remain the union of a man and a woman?' Answer incorrectly, and watch your career be taken from you and your reputation smeared on a thousand websites." "We have people who are losing their jobs, being smeared publicly because they hold the view that marriage is a union between one man and one woman."¹¹

Readers here will have heard that Brendan Eich, the founder and CEO of Mozilla, was removed from his leadership of the company after it was revealed that he had donated money to Proposition 8, the anti-gay marriage cause in California, in 2008. Eich's 'crime,' (which was apparently also committed by some seven million other California voters), was brought to light by employees at Mozilla who learned that in 2008, he had donated \$1,000 to support Proposition 8, a California law that banned same-sex marriage. In spite of the wishes of a majority of California voters, the courts have also since struck down that law. Eich apologized for causing "pain" and insisted he could separate his personal views from the way he ran the company.¹²

[I personally made it my ambition to eat at as many *Chik Fil A* diners as I could on my recent home leave in the USA, in support of the unwavering support for traditional marriage by the founder of that chain of fast-food restaurants. Astonishingly for this age, they even remain closed on Sundays so their staff can worship if they want to.]

It is clear that the gay rights 'thought police' now consider belief that marriage should be between a man and a woman, to be proof of "homophobia." It is not then just opposition to anyone supporting traditional marriage, but jeopardy for anyone who has *ever* believed what most people of every faith have always assumed and believed. We may legitimately fear that such a new litmus test may become common in places of employment and in the public square.

Where is the Church?

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s highest governing body has voted to allow ministers to perform same-sex marriages. Presbyterian clergy can now marry gay and lesbian couples

¹⁰ America in the 1950s was gripped by what became known as McCarthyism (named after an aggressive Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy), who rose to national prominence by seeking to ferret out communists holding prominent positions. During his investigations, safeguards promised by the Constitution were trampled. The damning question was "*Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist party?*"

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² We might be impertinent to ask, 1: Does this political correctness apply to all political issues, most political issues, or just this one political issue? Should everyone be asked about their support of same-sex marriage as a litmus test for continued or future service to a company or organization?

*wherever same-sex marriage is legal. The same-sex marriage votes come three years after the PCUSA voted to allow the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy.*¹³

Bishop Banda writes of the Christ-given mandate that the Church be the ‘salt and light in a world faced with various forms of decay and darkness. Fortunately most of the Church is not as compromised as the PCUSA. But US Christians may rightly ask what the American Church is doing to restrain her government from spreading evil around the world.

We might also ask why global Christians have such difficulty finding their voice in these matters, while our Muslim friends have no such struggle. Referring to the UN Special Session on 8-10 June 2011, which focused on universal access to treatment for HIV, Banda says that “nearly every Western State ... included some sort of call for member States to recognize the rights of LGBTI, ... along with open demands that member States ... should decriminalize them.” “When the formal reading was finally presented to the floor of the United Nations, Brazil and Mexico were the Movers for support of the resolution, *while Iran and Syria were allowed to voice objections.*” [*Italics added.*]

At an earlier UN vote on homosexual human rights in 2003, the first time the topic has been raised at the UN, it was derailed at the last minute *by an alliance of disapproving Muslim countries*. Five Muslim countries [Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia] delayed the vote until today and introduced amendments designed to kill it off.¹⁴

Remarkably but sadly, it is the followers of Islam who seem to be taking a far more ‘biblical’ stand on issues such as these. An Indian student of mine, Paul Asveen brought this strikingly to my attention in a paper he did for my class in “Child, Church and Mission” in Penang. He noted that most of the big issues for the West are not big deals for much of the rest of the world and especially in the Islamic world. He wrote:

“Save the environment, protect the animals and the birds, save the species and have lesser humans is their solution. *How many Islamic nations are screaming themselves hoarse on this issue?*”

Again for the “Christian” North and West: Pro-Choice, Feminist/Gender inequality, GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender), Live-in relationships (partners) – all of these are hot potatoes. Elections to high places can be won or lost depending upon how one ‘swings’ on these and similar issues. And as it was discussed today – all of these ‘perversions of the

¹³ Lillian Kwon “PCUSA Votes to Allow Clergy to Marry Same-Sex Couples; Approves Redefining Marriage” Christian Post 06/20/2014.

¹⁴ Reported by Andrew Osborn, The Guardian, Friday 25 April, 2003.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/apr/25/gayrights.andrewosborn>

truth,' simply put, are "anti-life." *Do any of the Muslim nations (or even Muslim communities in non-Muslim nations) have the above list as burning priorities to be tackled?*

Asveen continued:

- For the 'Christian' North and West – Career choices rank higher than family choices – choosing between a baby and a career is not so difficult anymore. *The Muslims, whatever one may say, are still having kids!*
- Who are the ones who are 'being fruitful and who are multiplying'?
- Who are the ones who unequivocally state that homosexuality or lesbianism is an abomination?
- Who are the ones who acknowledge that abortion is murder and do not permit it?
- Who are the ones who acknowledge their 'God' in all walks of life – schools, government, civil society, etc?
- Who are the ones who will not 'tolerate' (zealous) any kind of disparagement of the God they worship?
- Who are the ones who hold their families and communities together – in fact their ethno-religious bond (sons of Abraham/Ishmael) oftentimes exceeds the boundaries of the nation-states?

My student Paul was reminded of the parable of the two sons (Matt 21: 28-32). The first said he would obey, but he did not. The second refused to accept the fathers bidding but ended up obeying him. Who are the ones who are *actually* obedient?

"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' "And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went. "The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, 'I will, sir'; but he did not go. "Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first" (Matt 21: 28-31)."

On Being Salt and Light.

There can be no doubt that the Church – God's hands and arms, loving his people – is the largest and most effective influence for good and for blessing for the world today. Banda presents the Lazarus Project as one small but significant example of the immense scope of the Church's response to the AIDS crisis in Zambia -- the reality and value of the FBPs ("Faith-Based People) and FBOs responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, NASB).

I appreciate Bishop Banda's concluding remarks, and especially his reminder that the mandate for the church is to *actualize* their being salt and light (Mt. 5:10-13). The stand taken by Banda at

UNGASS is a good example of both being 'salt' – bringing loving grace to an unpleasant topic -- and of light – a ray of Truth in a conversation where clearly:

*“Justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance;
Truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found,
and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey” (Isaiah 59:14,15).*

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