Globalization, “Marketization,” and the Mission of Pentecostal Higher Education in Africa

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Introduction

Two Vignettes

In 1985, Barnabas Mtokambali launched Bethel Revival Temple in Morogoro, Tanzania. The church has grown to 850 members and has recently completed construction of a new meeting center that seats 2,000. They have launched an elementary school and have acquired 50 acres of property designated for a high school. With a vision to plant 100 new churches, Dr. Mtokambali initiated a training center for church planters, with 14 graduates this year. Graduates are expected to launch new churches and then return for additional training at a local Bible college. Bethel Revival Temple members provide food and care for the students during the four-month training program. “Some people bring maize, others bring rice, others bring soap,” says Mtokambali. “Everyone donates something toward the school.” So far, Bethel Revival Temple has launched 26 new churches. Mtokambali serves as an adjunct faculty member at Dodoma Bible College, Arusha Bible School, and also has served as curriculum developer at the Assemblies of God School of Theology in Lilongwe, Malawi. Mtokambali now serves on the African Doctoral Initiative Committee of the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance. Primarily, though,

he sees himself as a pastor and a church planter. “The essence of Pentecostalism,” he says, “is the liberation of the laity.”

The Pentecostal church he serves in Tanzania, like Pentecostal churches throughout Africa, is exploding with growth.

In 1996, Kingsley Larbi returned to Accra, Ghana, after completing his doctoral work at the University of Edinburgh and resumed his duties as Director of Central Christian College, which he had previously directed when it was called Central Bible College. Dr. Larbi, under the authority of Dr. Mensa Otabil, Pastor of International Central Gospel Church, initiated a process of expanding the College, heretofore focused on ministerial training, into a liberal arts university college. Having worked in the private sector as an accountant, Larbi envisioned an African Pentecostal university that would train leaders for many sectors of Ghanaian society. In 1999, the Academic Board of the University of Cape Coast, a government university, approved Central University College as an affiliate, providing accreditation for the Schools of Theology and Missions, Business Management and Administration, and all the programs being offered at the College.

An African Pentecostal university was born. Student enrollment that year was 428. In 2000, enrollment increased to 952. For 2003-04, Central University College has more than 2,000 students enrolled.

Purpose

Philip Jenkins, in his ground-breaking study *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, writes:

Over the past century ... the center of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Already today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. If we want to visualize a “typical” contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*. As Kenyan scholar John Mbiti has observed, “The centers of the church’s universality [are] no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila.”

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