

(A REVIEW)

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM CHURCH – The Church That Will Survive

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Title: The Third Millennium Church – The Church That Will Survive

Publishers: Morris Publishers, Nebraska, USA

Pages: 306

Price: \$13 USA; Canada \$18

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Signs that the Christian faith and the Churches established by various leaders in the past 1000 years would not be the same again became clearer since the early 1960s. It is not only the Catholic Church that has become a minority Church; the Mainline Protestant denominations have not performed better. Rev. Ndiokwere was not just expressing personal feelings about the future of Christianity in his new book - The Third Millennium Church; he is convinced that in the new millennium and as far as the Christian faith is concerned things will never be the same again.

Ripped by divisions, and fragmented by controversies, most of the older Churches are empty as their members abandon the faith and not a few have gone in search of religious and spiritual fulfilment in the new Evangelical Movements, that have continued to revolutionize lives of millions of Christians mainly in Latin America and Africa. Discordant voices among the leaders, ministers, and theologians of the older Churches have continued to alienate the older generation of Christians, while the younger and more enthusiastic ones experience a new faith lived in a more revolutionary and ecumenical manner in the new Church of Christ.

The author sees a new Church of Christ emerging in the new millennium, and this he calls “The Third Millennium Church – The Majority Church of the future.” Unlike the Mainline Christian Churches – Protestant and Catholic – the Christian Church of the 21st century will be the popular Church of all Christians while the older one may remain in essence only a ceremonial Church.

“Will it be the same Church?” Rev. Ndiokwere thinks that in one sense the Church will not be the same again. The Third Millennium Church will be less identified with the old structures – creeds – ministries – hierarchies, laws, and precepts. In place of rigid liturgies in Cathedrals and Mother Churches for example, the Church of the future will hold Prayer Services and Christian assemblies in stadiums and makeshift structures that can accommodate thousands of its flourishing members. The place of worship will no more be the abandoned cold parish Churches

Instead of accommodating only registered members of a particular creed or race, the Third Millennium Church is a Community of all Christians who accept Christ as the Savior and Son of God. It is open to all races, tongues, and colors. All barriers created by human agents and which have encouraged controversies, divisions, hatred, and deceit in the past century will not be found in the Third Millennium Church. The common denominator is there: “For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” (Rom. 10: 9-11). In deed there are concrete signs that the New Church Rev. Ndiokwere is advocating is already among us.

In Chapter One of “The Third Millennium Church,” – Christianity at the End of an Age – Successes and Failures - the author examines the situation of the Christian Churches at the end of the millennium. There have been successes and failures. Most of the failures are evident in the shrinking faith of believers as well as in the phenomenon of the empty Churches in Europe and North America. How have the mighty fallen!

The subject of self-inflicted wounds is taken up in Chapter Two – Discordant voices and crisis of faith. The confusion that arose from the reform movements of the Second Vatican Council illustrates the state of the Catholic Church at the threshold of the third millennium. Discordant voices of Reformers and Conservatives – Liberals and Right-wing Catholics - are no doubt ominous signs of failure.

While the older Churches reel under self-inflicted wounds, the proliferation of Evangelical Churches continues unabated. Their successes where the traditional Mainline Churches have failed in the past 1000 years are discussed in Chapter Three – “The Evangelical Threat.” The older Christian Churches failed in large part in their inability to model the moral conscience

of the world. The gospel message they preached did not permeate the souls of the people and so evil gained the upper hand in modern society. Related issues on evangelization and evils ailing the modern society are discussed in Chapter Four – “The Church, The Moral Conscience of the World – Fruitless Endeavor and Loss of Power.”

Whatever the lessons of the past failures, it may not be an easy ride to victory for the emerging Church of the future. The Third Millennium Church faces a lot of challenges. It must address the issues, which the Mainline Churches – Catholic and Protestant - have conscientiously ignored or have been timid to address. Chapter Five exposes some of these issues in “The Third Millennium Church – Healing the Wounds of Grave Forms of Injustice – A Thorn in the Flesh. Healing the wounds of racism, practiced in the Christian Churches is at the center of the mission of the new Church of the future. Believers of all races and tongues must be able to worship together in a color-blind Christian assembly.

Related to the above issue is the concept of mission and the missionary in the modern Church. This is explored in Chapter Six – “Missionary Enterprise in the Western Church and the Dilemma of the Third World Church. There are growing conflicts between the older Churches of Europe and North America and the younger Church of the Third World Countries. Can the Third Millennium Church resolve the conflicts? Ignored or left unresolved such conflicts will likely lead to a split between the Christian Church of the West and the Third World.

The features of the Third Millennium Church are clearly marked in Chapter Seven - the last Chapter of this work – “The Church That Will Survive – The Church of the Future.” The emerging Church of the future is serious and radical in its mission of conversion and renewal. It is above all a healing Church, addressing people’s overall needs – material and spiritual.

The Third Millennium Church – The Church That Will Survive - may after all be the true “United Church of Christ.” All Church authorities and Christians of all denominations must read Ndiokwere’s book. It is also a book for non-believers and other researchers who will find fascinating this approach of evaluating the future of this institution that has influenced humankind for 2000 years.

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COMENTS

**By Annette Osens, 1520 Bluebird Ln, Bozeman, Montana 59715
January 3, 1998**

I have completed your books and have enjoyed them very much. We have experienced all the problems associated with modernity that you write about. We are encouraged by the number of young parents who take seriously their responsibility to pass on the teachings of the Church and in whatever way possible to be that "troubler of Israel" you write about.

Racism in the Catholic Church

I would like to make a few comments about the latter portion of the book, The Third Millennium Church even though I know you are far more learned than I. I respectfully disagree with your assessment that there has been or is institutionalized racism in the Catholic Church. Maybe I'm missing something, because I have lived in Montana all my life and am unaware or largely shielded from what you are saying. I look at just the abortion issue and the Church has faithfully denounced this evil that is largely used against the poor and the minorities.

My studies began on this issue several years ago due to the charges leveled against the Catholic Church by a professor, Billy Smith at Montana State University. I have enclosed information about that series of correspondences. (See the enclosed documents (a) The Popes and Slavery: Setting the records straight - An examination of the facts showing that, contrary to popular opinion, the Catholic Church clearly condemned slavery early on; By Father Joel S. Panzer, in The Catholic Answer) (b) How Pius XII protected Jewish lives, By James Akin, in <http://www.catholic.com>)

I have read numerous books on everything from the inquisition, the colonization of the America, slavery, and the Holocaust. I truly wanted to know how the Catholic Church could be the design of God if it institutionally practiced the racism it was being accused of. How could She be guided by the Holy Spirit and kept from all error in Her teaching and then perpetrated such atrocities?

I found out that so much of these accusations are based on historical revisionism and moral relativity, which has its foundations in a hatred for Christianity as a whole, in the Catholic Church in particular. As you mentioned, members of the Church have failed to obey Her teaching authority and they are a painful part of the historical record, but this record contains far more evidences of selfless saintly missionaries who reflect the light of Christ. Montana's history is dotted with just such individuals. Father DeSmet, Fr. Ravalli and Mother Amadeus Dunn to name just a few dedicated their lives to the service of the Native Indians of our region. These missionaries understood the rapid societal changes the Indians were going to be forced to undergo and the missionaries heroically attempted to lessen its impacts and relieve their misery through both spiritual and temporal assistance.

Affirmative Action in the U.S.A.

This topic takes me to where you write about Affirmative Action. Affirmative Action programs helped equalize the effects of racial injustice in our country after civil rights victories, but the debate is just how long should these programs continue. I'm not trying to minimize past evils, but I have recently heard numerous black individuals in this country call for their end. It says to minorities, "You are unable to acquire the academic skills necessary to succeed, so we need to help you" or "You need preferential treatment in order to compete in society." Isn't preferential treatment and entitlements a form of discrimination and doesn't it continue to create animosity and distrust amongst countrymen?

Injustices of the past and the minorities

I'm of the opinion that injustices of the past can't and never will be wiped away by government enforced programs that for decades pit people of different races or ethnic backgrounds against one another. Isn't it the responsibility of a just government to ensure its citizens an equal opportunity to pursue "life, liberty and happiness?" It is my responsibility as a citizen to develop my God given talents to the best of my ability and accordance with God's will for my life.

The continued victimization of minorities in this country is perpetrated largely by those who have nothing but disdain for Christianity and wish to undermine it. Additionally, liberals acquire power by keeping the flames of

hatred burning. It even pits minorities against each other. For example, if a black student works hard to succeed in school he is ridiculed by other blacks and called "Uncle Tom's" for trying to succeed in a white man's world. Supreme Court Justice, Clarence Thomas is a current example.

The message of the Gospel is the only message that can heal the deep wounds of any kind of prejudice or injustice. Isn't it far better to step out of the mire of bureaucratic solutions which have exploited differences for the benefit of one race or another, moving forward, bridging the caps with the Gospel message of forgiveness, reconciliation and Christian brotherhood, which leads to a united nation not a fractured one.

Racism vis-à-vis orthodoxy

We had guests for New Year's Day. All very faithful Catholic families. I mentioned to them that you thought of the reason that black African priests were not welcome in America was due to racism. They think it is far more because of the orthodoxy of these priests. Modernists have worked hard to institute heterodoxy and they will protect "their territories" at all costs. I believe they are currently discouraged because the faithful seminaries and convents are flourishing and they haven't been able to arouse tremendous interest in their ideologies of women priests, birth control, etc.

The priest shortage in this diocese is largely contrived. We now have six young men who are in faithful seminaries and I doubt they will ever be let back into the state, unless we get a good and holy bishop. These seminarians have also petitioned to come and serve in the state, but have been denied or ignored. The heterodox want priestless parishes, which ultimately lead Catholics from the hierarchical Church.

Molestation of children by priests

Just one other comment, as if I haven't said enough already! You write about the lawsuits concerning the molestation of children by priests. I can tell you from experience that the Church did nothing to protect parishioners from these predators until the families sued. The priests were simply moved into another parish only to commit another molestation upon an innocent child.

I used to get very depressed and upset by all the ridiculous things that we witness as Mass and hear about in our Catholic Church around the country. Now I refuse to let the devil discourage me. It is time to evangelize and

proclaim the Good News, which has been faithfully proclaimed by His Catholic Church for 2000 years. What a treasure we have and the time spent lamenting is not well spent. It is time to teach where ever and how ever possible!!

Thank you fore this opportunity to share these comments with you.

Sincerely in Christ

Annette

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