

## Introduction

This file contains two letters written ten years apart, 1995 and 2005. I wrote the 1995 letter to an anonymous friend, while the second (2005) is written to me by another anonymous friend. The first is the crucial one from my point of view, but it cannot really be understood without first reading the second and later one.

Though the second comes ten years later, it describes the situation that triggered the topic of my 1995 letter. That is the only justification for putting a letter written by someone else in this bibliography.

You are advised to read the second and later letter before reading Letter 1. You can find it below. Sorry for the unanimity of it all. The “brother” in Letter 1 is a young Nigerian friend, while the writer of Letter 2 is a Caucasian medical doctor, also a friend, who pops in and out of Nigeria every couple of years.

## Letter 1

May 28, 1995

Dear Brother

It has been long since we have met face to face. In fact, we have not seen each other since your obtaining your doctorate. So, I owe you a heart-felt congratulations. I understand you are back in the chaplaincy at the hospital. I am glad to hear that.

In fact, I heard this from one of the students at TCNN who is planning to write his thesis on WHC. Both you and I are among his mentors. I am happy that we meet through the work of this student and to find that we both are still involved in WHC.

I am no longer with ICS or with Christian Health Association. Nigerianization has taken its course. I am back with my church, the CRCN. On their behalf I am teaching half-time at TCNN.

I am writing to you both as your friend and brother as well as fellow crusader for WHC. You have, I suspect, read the report of the medical team that visited the hospital in March this year. I am happy that the team took a sympathetic view of the plight of the place and are advising that help be provided.

I am ***not*** happy about one aspect of the report. It only *slightly* refers to **the need for a revival at the Hospital**. As I read the report, it became clear to me that a

basic problem is a lack of primary commitment to the Lord. This lack has caused the problems the team discovered.

You and I think wholistically. This means, among other things, that we always seek the root of the problem and do not stop with an analysis of the symptoms. The team emphasizes the symptoms, not the root problem.

In view of that, in my capacity as a brother in Christ sympathetic to both the hospital and denomination, and as a WHC crusader, I wrote a letter dated March 10, 1995, to both the President and the Gen. Sec. of the church. In that letter, I advise them to address the root of the problem and to encourage the development of a spiritual revival at the hospital.

Now that you are back on seat, I thought it well to express myself to you as well. Brother, I believe that, before all else, there is need for a spiritual revival at the hospital. Without such a revival, all other aid will be little more than a bandage approach. I ask or advise you to gather a few pious saints at the hospital and start working towards and planning for such a revival. Such a plan begins with fervent and frequent prayer and then allows the Spirit to carry you forward. He will definitely not let you down if you pursue this path. He will bring light and show you the practical steps that will lead to a revival.

On Tuesday, May 30, I am going to Canada and USA. I expect to return about November 1. So, I will be absent from the country. However, feel free to contact me at any time. Upon my return, I hope to see you soon.

May God bless you as you consider my proposal.

John

xxxx

## Letter 2

Dec/2005

Dear John:

Thanks for asking.... The thoughts were triggered by the book: *Discipling Nations*. It brought together for me a lot of my observations about the Nigerian culture – specifically what I was observing. To summarize very briefly (probably not doing much justice to Miller's thoughts): He looks at the continuum of world

views regarding what controls our destiny – from:

1. The one extreme (where animism and Islam reside) in which the “gods” capriciously control everything at their whim. At that end of the scale, the best we can hope for is to appease the gods, to find some favour with them so that they will bestow their favour upon us.. here we have the superstitious, the horoscope readers, wishful thinking.. This world view tends toward a fatalism and passivity that discourages dynamic action, taking action against the problems, struggles, diseases of life (typified by a nursing student who commented...: “I wish that God would enable me to move to America and work there,” while being entirely negligent in her studies).

2. The other extreme is the secular worldview which says it is *all* up to man.. We can control *everything* if we just work hard enough. It makes no allowance for God who moves sovereignly in the lives of men. The Aldous Huxley attitude: I am the master of my fate. This is the virus that has infected many of us as Western Christians.

3. The balance that Miller holds out as the more balanced Christian position is what he dubs “Theism,” which acknowledges the sovereignty of God but that He also utilizes and works through the efforts and wisdom and knowledge that He imparts to man. Both, God’s sovereignty and man’s efforts, play a part.

How this applies to the continuing animistic fatalism and passivity of the Tiv culture is:

When the nursing school at...has a 23% pass rate on the national exam, the principal shrugs his shoulders in an apparent sense that “God has not favoured us”. When a patient has a seizure on the ward, the nursing staff continue chatting at the desk in an apparent attitude “If it is God’s will that she fall on the floor and break her arm, who am I to intervene”. Now granted, there is a strong element of laziness in these and similar situations. But when I see how totally acceptable these responses are in the culture, I have to conclude that there is a deeper worldview root driving all this.

The other element that goes back to Animism is the sense of entitlement: If the “gods” bless me and give me a position as a nurse, then I am entitled to collect my salary without regard to my productivity, my work, my effectiveness, my compassion and service to patients. Again, this attitude is so prevailing that I have to assume that it is rooted in something deeper than just self justification.

What gives me hope is that I see in a number of the people we work with..., a different attitude. They acknowledge the sovereignty of God in the affairs of

men, but (as Shakespeare said) they “take arms against a sea of troubles”. Neither fatalism nor the illusion of man’s ultimate power control them, but a balance between them that reflects (I think it was) Luther “Pray as if works avail nothing, work as if prayer avails nothing”.

Anyway, that is the very brief version for you (liberally re-interpreted through my own thoughts). Miller’s insights gave me another layer of understanding of what I am seeing in Nigeria. I would highly value your thoughts about it, especially as you have studied the Muslim aspect of this in depth.

Peace....