

Nigeria's Anglican Leader Kidnapped by Gunmen

The Most Rev. Peter Jasper Akinola, a former primate of the Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion, is reported to have been kidnapped by some gunmen at around 3 p.m. (local time) Tuesday.

Akinola, who is also a former president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), was reported to have been kidnapped alongside his driver in front of his office in the town of Abeokuta in the southwest Nigerian state of Ogun.

Akinola heads a foundation he established to minister to the unemployed youths and was in the offices of the foundation when he was kidnapped at gunpoint.

Yusuph Olaniyonu, a government official in Ogun, broke the news of the kidnap of the Anglican leader in a press statement he issued Tuesday on behalf of the government of Ogun State.

Olaniyonu, who is the commissioner of Information of Ogun State, disclosed that the Anglican leader has been rescued unhurt. According to Olaniyun, the Christian leader was rescued by government officials of Ogun state led by Gov. Ibikunle Amosun and security agents.

The government spokesman said: "Dr. Akinola and his driver were kidnapped in front of the main entrance of the Peter Akinola Foundation's Centre for Youth Industrial Training, located along the Abeokuta-Lagos expressway on Tuesday about 3 p.m.," (9 a.m. EST).

Akinola is an outspoken leader of the Anglican Communion not only in Africa, but also seen as a voice for the Anglican communion in the Southern Hemisphere.

He led a strong protest against same-sex marriage in the Anglican Communion and successfully established some diocese for some Episcopal members in North America who subscribed to the position that same-sex marriage was unbiblical.

On May 13, 2011, in the city of Jos in central Nigeria, Akinola said in a speech at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), that humanity is today living, "helplessly in an age of lawlessness and overt permissiveness, including theological and religious permissiveness," all because theologians are no longer concerned with doing theology and teaching it in order to, "help Christians understand the Triune God from the perspective of Jesus the Christ; build up faith in Christ for the purpose of eternal salvation; equip Christians in order to facilitate their spiritual growth; and, present the church at the Parousia, blameless."

He added: "Theologians and ordained ministers of the church in the west encourage and in fact promote relativism, they doubt established truths about God and in doubting eternal truths, they lose all reason to pursue revealed biblical truth."

As a consequence, Akinola says, the minds of these theologians and ordained ministers, "have stopped working the way of God," thereby, leading them into "vile and ungodly thinking."

Akinola laments that: "The ultra liberal theologians in our time deny the validity of the sections of scripture which do not agree with their lopsided thinking. For example, they'll readily claim that scriptural rejection of human sexual aberrations is incompatible with modern and 'continuing revelation'. In other words, modern cultural trappings are to be upheld and valued over and against the biblical provisions."

The Anglican in stressing his position cites as an example of how some western theologians misuse the scriptures, the

Anglican leader says, "In point of fact an American bishop in the Episcopal Church, Charles Benison, who in my opinion has no business being a bishop in the church of God in the first place; he is better off as a humanist and human rights campaigner, once asserted "we wrote the bible, and we can rewrite it."

Akinola says this method of doing theology has adversely affected the church in the west and is gradually drifting into the church in Africa and in other developing nations.

"My worry is that this situation does not start and stop in the west. It filters in to our setting. It's everywhere," he says.

The cleric says this development is not new as even in the era of the Apostles such misguided theological minds were in existence.

"In the church at Ephesus Paul found that there were teachers of all sorts whose teaching ministry could only mislead the faithful, cause divisions and even destroy the faith," he says.

From the Nigerian experience, the Anglican leader says the relativism theological virus has become so endemic that most church leaders have gone astray.

"Like in our country today, there are people who major in speculative and eccentric theology rather than Christocentric theology. They manifest clear signs of immaturity which we may describe using Paul's ideas as gullible and vulnerable infants tossed about helplessly by the turbulent waves and cunning of deceitful schemes," Akinola says.

In view of the prevailing challenges of "severe disasters and afflictions of unimaginable proportions like earthquakes, tsunamis, devastating floods, resurgent Islam sponsored terrorist attacks, wars and famines," confronting humanity,

theologians and ordained ministers who ought to have served as catalysts to providing sound and empirical biblical solutions to these challenges have themselves compounded the problem by their inadequacies, Akinola said.

“The point must be made that in our time, there is a yawning gap (ever widening, ever deepening) between theological formation and service delivery by those supposedly trained in theology. Consequently, postulants and other students of theology who are ordained to serve the church of Christ almost always find themselves unable to meet critical personal life situations such as bereavements, troubled marriage, disobedient and outright rebellious children, teenage pregnancy, abortion and economic calamity,” Akinola also said.

He also stresses that, “Even in the more general areas of political upheavals, religious and communal clashes, bad governance, unbridled corruption in high and low places our men with all their theological education are often at sea not knowing what to do.”

By these acts, Akinola says, theologians have, “thus inadvertently create a religious and spiritual vacuum which commercial prophets and fake pastors quick seize and manipulate the people for selfish financial gains.”

Akinola concludes his treatise by asking the question, “Where then is God and all our theological enterprise in all of this? I think there is a huge challenge before us.”

As a way forward, the Anglican leader says, there is the urgent need for church leaders, “to pay particular attention to current theological aberrations, revisionist agenda, promotion and equation of shadow and social gospel with authentic gospel of salvation.”