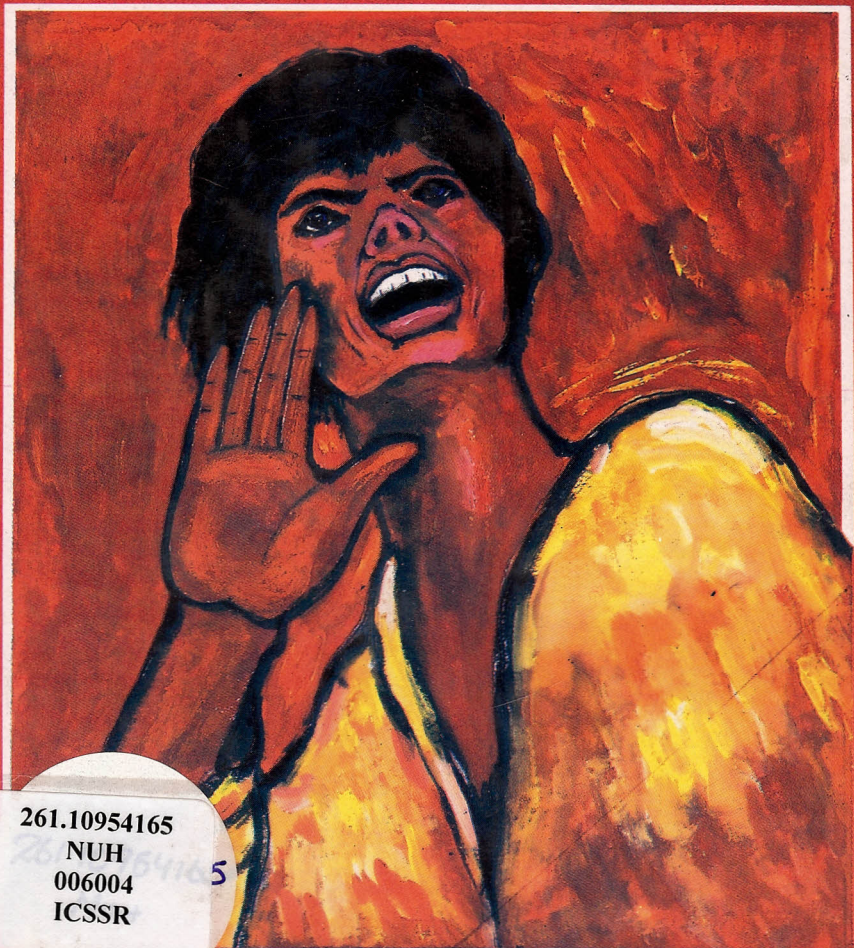


A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON NAGA SOCIETY



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REV. DR. V. K. NUH

A Theological Reflection On Naga Society



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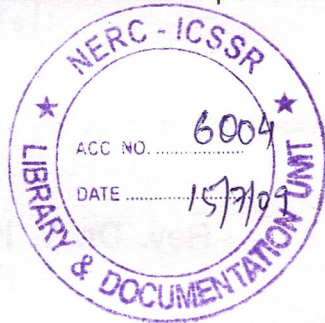
**Research Wing,
Council of Naga Baptist Churches,
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First Edition (1996)
3000 Copies.



Published by : Research Wing, Council of Naga Baptist Churches, Midland, Kohima, Nagaland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give thanks to my parents who gave me the strength to hold on to my conviction. They not only taught me the principle of the ageold religion, but also brought me up in a Christian home. Christianity began in our village, and the infallible Word of God has guided me throughout my life. In the crucial history of Naga struggle in faith and action, I have been able to put things together in this book. Various prominent persons with whom I came to interact both in national and international levels provided a background for this theological reflection on Naga society.

I also thank all companions who shared the weal and woe in the journey with me and often helped me in confused situations. First and foremost, my wife Kewepe-u who has prayed, worried, cried and rejoiced with me throughout the journey. My children, John, Vekulo, Bethel, Esther, Kesonyi-u and Renilo have also stood by me in all my struggles.

Most specifically, my thanks must go to the Council of Naga Baptist Churches for granting me the privilege of undertaking this research. This book would not have been a reality had it not been for the invaluable help I received from Loli Kape, Neiwete Chirhah and Bethel Nuh, who helped me day and night, typing and editing the manuscripts. I am particularly thankful to Rev. L. Bizo the President of CNBC for the Foreword. Above all, I owe everything to the faithful provision of God, who gave us the Glorious Hope.

Rev. Dr. V. K. Nuh

FOREWORD

This book comes at a time of unique opportunity. These are days when serious theological reflections, societal and situational analysis, socio-political re-assessment, cultural and religious evaluation, historical and biblical reflections need to be made to re-enforce the moral fabric of our spirituality. This book on "Theological Reflection on Naga Society" is all about these. It is a blending of history, politics, religion, theology and even sociology.

In his conclusion, the author says, "In a particular time God allows a particular problem to happen in a particular place. Today, as we look back at the history of Christianity in Nagaland over the past 125 years, we realise how God has been faithful to the Naga people". In another place, he quoted Johannes Bauw: "The Church does not create mission, but the mission creates the Church". He then states: "What is it that God wants from us today? I believe, He wants political order, social harmony, and economic justice. He wants man to preserve His beautiful creation. This is to be done by people who support all good things and are against all evil things". This is a direct challenge to our spirituality.

Reading between the lines, the author's insights into the Naga root and society, the analysis of Israelite's history and the Naga political journey; the reference to the constitution of India and the yehzabo of the Naga National Council; and the bold and frank manner in which his viewpoints are presented touching on women issues, human rights, history of developed countries and its bearing on our society, national economy and even the government functioning at home are all commendable and really worth reading.

This book "A Theological Reflection on Naga Society" is a worthy logical successor to the "Crusade on Naga Morality" by the same author Rev. V. K. Nuh, a good friend of mine.

Reflections should bring results. The hopeful thrust of the book is expressed in the words of the great social reformer Nehemiah, "Let us rise and build" (Neh. 2:18). I am pleased to commend this timely book to everyone serious about personal faith and relevant action.

16 November, 1996

Rev. L. Bizo, President
Council of Naga Baptist Churches

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages theological formulations arose in the context of the culture realities. As theology speaks in context of certain time and situation, our theology must interpret our situation in the right perspective of the history of humanity. We have come across in Church history that in each period theologians interpreted the historical recollection of God's revelation in the context of their time and situation.

On the other hand, there are times when the message of the Church becomes harmless and becomes non-prophetic and theological distortion occurs. And yet, the sharp cutting edge of the critical corrective theology of the truth is always present. Theology must save and liberate from all kinds of sin, social evil, exploitation, extortion; killing, kidnapping, oppression, corruption, and so on.

Today, the Naga situation calls for a response from the Church to be prophetic. We need bold and decisive response that is prophetic because it must speak in the particular context of Naga history. Naga theology cannot be neutral, but must speak out the truth; and clear demarcation must be drawn between truth and falsehood.

It is now 125 years since the Gospel came to the Naga society. When our Church was in the cradle and young, it was beautiful and adorned. But when our Church has grown up, it has become rebellious. The day when our Church was struggling for survival, our Church was healthy and productive. But as we see today our Churches have become traditionalistic with mere structural obedience, without being obedient to the Scripture.

The Naga people have gone through sufferings and have had a miserable life for the last half a century, but our Churches could not participate in the pain and suffering of

the people. Today our Church must formulate its theology to deal or participate in complex situations in all walks of life. A relevant theology in the Present Naga situation is the need of the hour. This book is a call to the Naga Church especially the concerned theological people to formulate a theology which is saving and liberating.

What we need is a dynamic re-interpretation of the past, taking into serious consideration the new element of change, What people had said, "good" 50 years ago might be "useless" today. No one can stop things from changing but only God changes things according to His purpose.

The emergence and growth of Naga indigenous theology is endeavouring in theological reflection on the Naga experience in the struggle of identity through culture, religion, customs, socio-economic and political movement.

Asia has been a religious culture centre, in which there was an unbroken unity between the Socio-Politic and Religion. In fact, religion provided the integrity, principles and social structure where political authority was legitimized by it.

However, within half a century, the Naga society has undergone a dramatic change. In the transition period of the changes, most of the cultures and traditions have been completely distorted. Therefore, the Naga society has gone through crisis after crisis. Dr. M. M. Thomas rightly said, "The Moral Crisis is often an expression of Cultural Crisis, arising from the loss of traditional cultural roots without acquiring new roots". In the last two decades, our churches were so busy conducting Revival meetings, Crusades and Training programs. Nevertheless, the prevalent Naga morality reflects unfruitful spirituality.

I believe there is something seriously wrong that is why we do not reason why such things happen. It may be that our theology is not based on Biblical Truth and historical realities, or may be our message is too superficial.

Perhaps, we have become too conscious of structural or traditional loyalty, and failed to obey the Holy Spirit. A. Z. Tozer said, "I am a prophet, not a promotor, not a religious manager but a prophet, let me never become a slave of the crowd, save me from the curse of compromise, or imitation of professionalism." I believe many of our Pastors have become Church managers and promoters not prophets. Many of our Church leaders have become slaves of the crowd not servants of the Lord. That is why, truth is not prevailing in our Society. We are aware that there has been contextualization and formulation of Theology in the context of the prevalent situation and cultural realities from generation to generation.

We have seen how Liberation Theology reflects in the Black Community. The Theology was developed out of oppressive situation in Latin America. It has significantly played in the Church, the Western World, and has brought dramatic changes in political and social structure.

Most recently, Indian Christian thinkers have developed Dalit Theology because of the oppression by the upper caste. However, when the low castes and depressed classes wanted to move upwards, the high castes and upper caste Christians were not prepared to accept them into their fold. While caste is not theologically accepted by the Christian Church of India, it has been tolerated by the social practice, because it is a cultural and historical reality.

However, Naga Tribal Theology has nothing to do with Dalit Theology because caste system is not known to the Naga people. M. E. Prabhakar said, "Indian Christian Theology

has not become duly sensitive to the tribal concern and deeper dimension of the struggle and hope for fuller humanity."

Sunder Clarke has rightly said, "It cannot be armchair Theology or verandah Theology, or a shadow Theology, but it will have to be a Theology worked out from history of a suffering people at the grass root level."

Time has come, that Nagas must develop our own Theology to speak in this situation. Our Theology today must be a participation of the pain and suffering of the people.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. V. K. Nuh is a well-known Baptist minister in Nagaland. He is serving the churches in various ways.

*He has participated in many activities concerning public affairs. Among the books written by him are, **Nagaland Church and Politics, My Country - My People, Participation in Suffering and Struggling, Towards Naga Unity, Episode On Naga Tragedy, Crusade On Naga Morality**, and many other books and booklets.*

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the founding and promotion of the Churches and for his unique service to the State and Society, the Council of the Chakhesang Baptist Church conferred on him the title Executive Secretary Emeritus. He was also the President of the Nagaland Peace Council.

For his distinguished administrative and theological contribution to the churches and to society he was honoured with Doctor of Divinity (honoris causa) by the Academy of Ecumenical Indian Theology and Church administration at Gurukul Theological College, Madras.

Presently, he is serving as General Secretary of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches and is a Member of Human Rights Commission in the Baptist World Alliance.

Price : Rs. 80/-