



How God Speaks Best

By Suzanne Ralston

“Why does Africa have so many cases of HIV/AIDS?” asks Kenyan publisher David Waweru, of WordAlive in Nairobi. “Why do African countries rank high on the corruption index? Why do they have so many social issues? It is because we need to internalize the Gospel.”

Though the Church in Africa grew from approximately 10 million Christians in 1900 to 360 million in 2000, and despite predictions that by 2050, Africa will win the title of most Christian continent in the world [see Philip Jenkins’ *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford University Press, USA; 0195300653), Waweru says Africans still “need to internalize the Gospel.”

“We need to translate the Gospel from head knowledge into action,” he affirms. To facilitate this, his company, WordAlive Publishers, joined with Zondervan to release the Africa Bible Commentary (ABC) in July 2006.

“God speaks best,” says Waweru, “when he speaks the people’s language. The general aim of the Commentary is to make the Word of God speak relevantly to African realities today.”

What Bible commentary tackles tribalism, dowries, bribes, civil strife, refugees, polygamy, syncretism, debt, street children, and the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS virus—without relying on Western materials? The new title explores all of these issues, and many more, in an African context. According to general editor Tokunboh Adeyemo, the ABC is “an explanation of the

whole Bible as seen through the eyes of African scholars who respect the integrity of the text and use African proverbs, metaphors and stories to make it speak to African believers.”

“It is written by scholars,” says Wambura Kimunyu, executive area director for the International Bible Society Africa office in Kenya, “but in language that is accessible to lay people, addressing the issues that Christians in Africa interact with every day.”

The 70 scholars who contributed to the one-volume commentary are all African theologians. They hail from over twenty countries, ten Christian traditions and fifteen diverse professional backgrounds.

The group collaboration was conceived twelve years ago, according to Adeyemo, during the Second Pan-African Christian Leadership Assembly, held in Kenya, when the participants recognized “deficient knowledge of the Bible and faulty application of its teaching as the primary weakness of the church in Africa.”

The ABC received high praise from many, including the Most Rev. Dr. Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah, the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Ghana, John Stott, and Rick Warren. Aboagye-Mensah appreciates that the material is written from the “practical experience of scholars who love God.” The title has its detractors as well, and WordAlive’s Web site includes “A Response to the Catholic Church of Kenya’s Rejection of the Africa Bible Commentary.”

“There is such a need for this title,” says Waweru, “WordAlive is handling the Pan African distribution plans for the English-language version. Matthew Elliott, with Oasis, is handling distribution in Nigeria. The French version is being published by Editions Farel in France, and there are immediate plans for versions in other languages as well: Kiswahili, Zulu,

Portuguese, Amharic, Yoruba, and Afrikaans.”

“We sold 1,500 copies of this 1,600 page, U.S.\$26 commentary within two weeks of its release,” says Waweru. The controversy since has accelerated WordAlive’s already brisk sales.

© 2006 [David C. Cook Global Mission](#). First printed in *InterLit*, March, 2006.

ChristianTrade Association International

PO Box 62187 • Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2187 USA

TEL +1 719 432 8428 • FAX +1 719 325 7001 • info@ChristianTrade.com • www.ChristianTrade.com