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The Gospel in a Shoebox The Kefa Sempangi Story

Michael R. Gilstrap

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 24:19)

And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward. (Matthew 10:42)

Kefa Sempangi grew up in a rural village in Uganda. Born to a farm family, Kefa was not exposed to many of the cultural influences we in the West take for granted, nor was there a Christian mission in his village. His mother, however, was a believer, and knew Kefa needed an education. She especially wanted her son to be able to read the Bible, so she sent him off to a neighboring village to attend school. In the providence of God, it was one of the best decisions she ever made. Kefa's education not only prepared him for his life's work, but this young man from a rural village in east Africa would one day help deliver many thousands of young people out of the ravages of Idi Amin's reign of terror.

The Idi Amin Years

Kefa attended the university in the mid-1960s. He majored in the Fine Arts, but was also drawn to a career in the ministry. After graduation, he taught the Bible to his friends as well as pursued a career as an artist. When Idi Amin - to power in 1971, the persecution of Christians began. It was at this point that Kefa was called into the ministry, and he started a church in the city of Kampala, capital of Uganda.

I use that term "called" carefully. God must have called him, otherwise Kefa would have been out of his mind to plant a church at this particular time. The years 1971-1973 mark one of the most violent

reigns of terror in modern history. During these years, Idi Amin wiped out an entire class of educated, cultured men and women. Through the feared State Research Bureau (SRB), Amin murdered most of the intellectuals, business leaders, artists, and clergymen.

Kefa started his church at the beginning of this time. The Lord was with the church and blessed her mightily (a la the Acts of the Apostles). In a little over two years, Kefa's congregation grew from just under 20 people to over 14,000 men!

In early 1973, Kefa discovered that the government was systematically executing Christian leaders. Knowing the danger to his life didn't deter Kefa from preaching the gospel, however. Each day as he went to preach, he said goodbye to his family,

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realizing it might be the last time he would see them.

It was near Easter, 1973. Kefa was preparing for a worship service. As was his custom, he paused a few minutes to pray in the prayer closet which adjoined the sanctuary. When he finished praying, he looked up to see five men from the SRB standing over him.

The leader said to him, 'We've come to kill you, do you have anything to say?'

Kefa was speechless...literally! He relates, "I tried to speak, but I couldn't. It was as if my throat was closed up and my tongue was numb. I was afraid, but my dumbfoundedness was more than that. I was silenced. I couldn't say anything."

Interpreting the silence as paralyzing fear, the SRB leader repeated, 'We've come to kill you. Do you have anything to say?' A few seconds later he shouted at Kefa, "Did you hear what I said!?"

It was in that silence that God intervened. Kefa remembers that he found himself saying, "I am a

"I am a dead man. I am dead. My life is dead and buried in Jesus Christ. But I want to pray for you that after you kill me, you do not come into eternal judgment."

dead man. I am dead. My life is dead and buried in Jesus Christ. But I want to pray for you that after you kill me, you do not come into eternal judgment." After he finished speaking, Kefa said he couldn't believe he had said those words. His statement just came out without thought.

The leader was a bit taken back. He barked one word at Kefa, "Pray." Kefa could hardly believe his ears. He told them to close their eyes, which they did. Kefa kept his eyes open, however. He was afraid it was a trick and as soon as he bowed his head and closed his eyes they would blow his head off.

Such was not the case. After he finished praying, the men raised their eyes, and the leader commanded the others to leave the room. He told Kefa to go ahead and preach, but that he would be keeping an eye on Kefa, which he did. The SRB leader attended Kefa's church faithfully: first as a spy and then as a convert. The Lord used Kefa Sempangi's bold testimony to convert a murderous SRB agent.

Not long after this episode, a prominent government official visited Kefa's church. After the service, the official, who had brought his son along, asked Kefa to stop by his home during the next week to preach to his family. Later that week, Kefa and

one of his elders made their way to the government official's home. He knocked at the door and it opened. Moving inside, Kefa called out. Not finding anyone about, the elder and Kefa chatted in the entry way a few minutes anticipating the arrival of the family.

Just when they were about to leave, a boy came out of one of the back rooms. It was the son who had come to church with his father. Kefa asked the boy, "Where's your father?" At first the question failed to register in the boy's mind, but then he led them to the door of the sitting room. The boy pointed into the door. Kefa turned the corner, but then jumped back. There on the floor were the remains of the boy's father: his eyes, ears, and tongue. All other remains of the family had disappeared. The boy had escaped by hiding under a bed.

The boy was so traumatized, he could not speak. Taking the youngster back to the church, Kefa read the Scriptures to him. Kefa said it was like medicine to the young man. Slowly, the Scriptures had their effect on the boy, and he began to speak, relating to his pastor what the SRB had done to his family.

His First Orphanage

It was at that moment that Kefa started what would eventually result in his exile. Seeing the plight of this newly orphaned young boy, Kefa recognized the need for an orphanage. Thousands upon thousands of children had been orphaned during Idi Amin's reign of terror. Most of the people were afraid to take in the children of executed parents for fear that Amin would come after their family. Kefa was well acquainted with the danger, but felt it more important to care for the orphans than worry about what Idi Amin or his henchmen might or might not do, even though he now had a wife and infant daughter to worry about. Kefa's orphanage quickly grew from one young boy to 52 children in less than three months.

Three months after he started the orphanage, Idi Amin discovered Kefa was still alive. Angrily he sent his chief assassin with three other men to finally put an end to this Christian pastor. Kefa's SRB convert heard of the plot to assassinate his pastor and quickly rushed over to his house. Kefa was home with his wife and daughter. The former SRB leader rushed into the house just as the assassination team drove up to Kefa's home. Kefa and his family were rushed out the back door to hide in the bushes behind the house. At the same time the assassins came in through the front. The Lord kept the infant baby quiet, or their hiding place would have been discov-

ered, and the Sempangi's murdered.

His Exile

Kefa and his family made it out of the country into Kenya, later traveling to the Netherlands. There he met Dr. H.R. Rookmaaker, professor of Art at the Free University of Amsterdam, who introduced him to Dr. Edmund Clowney, then President of Westminster Theological Seminary. Dr. Clowney arranged for Kefa and his family to come to the United States and attend WTS and complete his theological education.

Return to Uganda

Kefa was able to return to Uganda in 1979. Idi Amin may have been gone, but the aftermath of his reign was evident everywhere. He tried to pick up where he left off, but it was difficult. There was so much to do! He got the church going again, and worked with any and all who were willing.

Even though he didn't have any time, he felt compelled to start the orphanage again. He had thought the problem of orphans bad in 1973, it was hundreds of times worse now. The orphaned children of Kampala were sleeping on the huge garbage pit of the capital. The fermenting garbage would give off heat during the cold nights keeping the children warm while providing them with refuse to feed on. There were over two acres of this modern day Gehenna. Official estimates of the number of orphans was over 800,000 in this country of 14 million.

Kefa started with 35 orphans he picked up on the street. After three or four scrubblings and a similar number of teeth scrapings, the children reflected the heritage of whence they came. It was obvious from the bright, intelligent looks that these were not children of peasants but sons and daughters of the educated class that Amin had annihilated.

Kefa now has over 8,000 orphans in his homes. As a Christian, he firmly believes the hope of the future lies with the children. The communists believe the same thing. There is a battle going on in this east African nation far removed from the spotlight of our modern media: It is the battle for Uganda's future. For this country, ravaged in the 1970s by the butcher Amin, and now ravaged by the AIDS virus, the future is bleak.

But the Marxists are there. The Chinese bring their tractors and heavy farm machinery to help the people grow their own food. The Russians ship in rice and other foodstuffs by the train load to meet

current needs. All the while both godless groups fill peoples' minds with propaganda: "America is Christianity and Christianity is America, Hate Americans. Hate Christianity. It was the Americans who caused all this pain and evil. Kill the Americans. Kill Christianity!"

It is in this environment that Kefa Sempangi is laboring. He knows the real truth, but it's hard to convince the people. He sees every grain of Russian

**"... why shouldn't Christians sow
seeds of love, peace, and
reconciliation ?"**

rice as a little bullet aimed at Christianity. Every Chinese tractor is a tank with machine guns mining down death on Christianity. You can imagine the effect this Marxist generosity has on the children. All the good things come from the communists. All the bad, evil things come from the Americans. Couple that with the largesse of university scholarships given by the Marxists to the best and brightest of the Ugandan youth, and the future of Christianity in Uganda is bleak indeed

The Gospel in a Shoebox

Not one to give up, Kefa has devised a method to overcome the propaganda, at least in his orphanages. This is where you and I come in. I've titled it *The Gospel in a Shoebox*, and that's not far from the truth. If the communists are sowing seeds of Marxism in the young of his land, then Kefa reasoned, why shouldn't Christians sow seeds of love, peace, and reconciliation? Perhaps the seeds won't sprout in his generation, but they certainly will bear fruit in the generations to come.

Kefa wants as many American Christian children as possible to make up a shoebox of the gleanings of their life to send to one of his orphans. You should keep it under two pounds, but fill it with all the mundane things your children take for granted: small toys, clothes, soap (very popular), pencils, toothbrush and tooth paste, a small Bible or Gospel of John, etc. Have your son or daughter write a letter and include a picture of himself or herself. If your son is 8 years old, then have him write on the top of the box "FOR AN EIGHT YEAR OLD BOY." Your child will receive a letter of thanks in return from one of the Ugandan orphans. You may want to repeat the process every two or three months. The

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Starry, Starry Night Studies in Genesis One

James B. Jordan

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs. . . ."

And God made the two great lights; the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. (Genesis 1:14, 16)

On the fourth &y, God began distributing His work of creation to various rulers. The first of these rulers were the astral bodies, and they were made as symbolic governors of time. The text here tells us that one of their primary functions was as symbols, but as symbols of what? We can take it from the text that their function as symbols is associated with time, for they were also made to "separate the day from the night," and to be "for seasons, and for days and years" (v. 14).

Not only are they symbols for the passing of time, however, but in some sense they also "govern" it (v. 16). In my opinion, for reasons made clear in earlier studies in this series, this governing function is associated with the fact that they are positioned over the earth, and give light down to it. (See especially *Geneva Review* 25, my essay "Star Over Bethlehem; A Snapshot of Dominion.")

But do these astral bodies really govern time? What is time? Is it a "thing," that can be ruled? And are the sun, moon, and stars self-conscious so that they can truly be said to "govern"?

Asking these questions makes it obvious that the astral bodies do not really govern, rather they symbolize governors. They symbolize the government of history, of times and seasons, by God and man. It is true that they mark time, but this bare fact is, by creation design, a pointer for something greater.

Everything in creation reflects the Creator, and thus symbolizes Him in one way or another. Beyond this, everything in creation symbolizes man, for man is himself the image of God. Keeping these two facts firmly in mind, we are not surprised to see the sun, the moon, and the stars regularly functioning as symbols in the Bible.

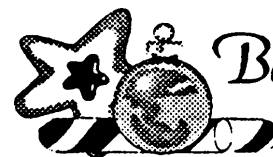
The sun, for instance, is used to symbolize the Lord in several places. Psalm 19 is a prominent instance: The sun is like a bridegroom, like a strong man. The reference here, first of all, is to Samson, but beyond this to the Messianic Judge of all the earth, who is to come and bring His Word (vv. 7-11).

(On Samson, see my remarks in my book, *Judges*, published by Geneva Ministries.) We can also look at Psalm 84:11, "The Lord God is a sun and a shield."

Night gives way to day, and this is an image of the coming of the Kingdom. If Nicodemus met with Jesus by night, this was in part a reflection of the condition of history at that point, for the whole Old Covenant is seen as nighttime, Malachi 4:1 says that a "day is coming," and goes on in verse 2 to predict that "the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in its wings." In this way, moon and sun are governors of time, of the Old Covenant and New Covenant, but they really symbolize the First and Last Adams, who are the real governors of these two eras. As I suggested in my series on the Calendar, in volume 1 of *The Geneva Papers*, perhaps this is the reason why the festival times of the Old Covenant were all lunar ordinances, while the New Covenant Church had historically oriented around the sun (with Christmas at the Winter Solstice).

The stars of the heaven are emblems of the heavenly host. The Bible calls attention to the glory and beauty of the stars in Canticles 6:10 and 1 Corinthians 15:41. They represent the angelic host in Judges 5:21, Job 38:7, and Isaiah 14:13. They represent the human host of the Lord as well, as we see from the promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5, reiterated in 22:17; 264, and Deuteronomy 1:10. The fact that Abraham's descendants were to be like stars implies that they would not only be positioned in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), but also that they would be rulers over the gentiles.

In the next several installments in this series, we shall explore this subject more fully, but this Christmas, as you look at the wintry sky, or glance at expensive Astronomy coffee-table books in the bookstore, remember that the glory of the heavens is but an image of what is to be revealed in us through Christ Jesus.



Best wishes of
a Merry Christmas and
Blessed New Year

Restoring the Classical Christian Curriculum



The Trinitarian Concept of Language in Action

Gary Hafer

Language can be compared to a series of windows contained along a single supporting wall. The **observer** can look through anyone of these windows to see a part of the world outside "**captured**" within its **frame**; vision is impeded by the scope of the window itself, offering only an incomplete, initial "picture" The observer may not be capable of seeing the **complete sky** because the window does not provide **visual** access to the zenith.

Similarly, if this same observer decides to look through another window, he will find a corollary limiting restriction placed on his vision. But this time, he has also gained something valuable: another perspective on the outside world, provided by a window that is *oriented* differently than the **first** one. It is not that the world outside the window has changed, but that the **observer's** perspective has now been multiplied by adding a single perspective, demonstrated in looking through another window that **offers** another vantage **point**. What looked like a sagging **porch** on the neighbor's property may appear less lopsided now that an additional **perspective** has been added. (Perhaps the **observer** can even see the zenith **from** this second **window**!)

This simple situation illustrates how students need to recognize **that**, although man's perspectives are always limited, man can multiply them in order to gain a fuller picture, a process obtainable through language skills. Unlike God who sees all of reality exhaustively and **all** at once, man can only see **via** perspective. Consequently, the student who tries to think **through** problems and subjects will always arrive at a more **limited** conclusion, or **judgment**, than God Himself does, but **that** should not **discourage** him from gaining more comprehensive understanding.

Of course, we can know Truth itself because the **God** of the Bible has revealed its infallibly to us. But

we as fallible, limited creatures do not grasp the exhaustiveness of God's revelation the way God **does**; **instead**, our **vision** is **limited** by our finiteness or **creaturehood**.

So how can the student gain **multiple** perspectives? **R.J. Rushdoony**, in his *One and the Many*, contends that God has embossed His Trinitarian nature on His creation indelibly. Believing that to be true—that the **whole** creation declare the **glory** of God—I contend that **language**, as the tool of learning, can be distinguished in three aspects, although these can never be separated. I also believe that this is represented in what Christian linguist Kenneth Pike called *tagmemics*, and what **Vern Poythress**, professor of theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, dubbed (for our **purposes**) the *triads*.

Consider the following **problem-solving** task ("A") given to a home **schooler**, at the junior high level, involving an **historical question**:

The American war that pitted neighbor against neighbor, state against state, and even family against family has been called by different names, such as the War Between the States and the Civil War. Based on your reading of the history of this war, and particular conflicts that arose before the first gun was even shot, which name (if any) seems to be the more accurate one?

Before your home **schooler** (and **you**!) finish shuddering at the complexity of that question, compare the above with the typical essay question ("B") that follows:

What were the causes of the Civil War?

Is there any essential difference between these two problem-solving questions, other than their contrasting length?

If you answered yes, may I kindly urge you to reread both examples again? All of the elements explicitly raised in the "A" selection should be equally addressed in the "B" selection, although the latter only *implicitly* suggests such.

Let me **illustrate**: The "A" selection specifically asks for a student **response** based on the triadic perspectives. In Pike's **terminology**, it asks for a *particle* or *static perspective on the war*: "what particular conflicts" and the importance of names. (If you don't think names are important, look how often God has changed the names of His patriarchs,

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beginning with Abram/Abraham.) The *static* perspective looks at the world as being composed of "things" (particles, **elements**, items, issues, **names**, definitions, etc.). In most cases, this is the only perspective that students **normally** give in essay answers because the essay question suggests only one.

"A" also asks for a *wave* or *dynamic* perspective on the **war**: looking at a series of discrete actions in a process. Tracing the **history** of the war and looking for its causes and effects imply a *dynamic* perspective. Chronology (dates in sequence) **are** included here also.

Lastly, "A" asks for a *field* or *relative perspective*. The student is required to see relationships and make judgments based on **them**: for instance, he must **compare** and contrast the various names for the war, perhaps arriving at an assessment based on the contrasting views of spokesman for the North and the South respectively. **Classifying** the war as a particular "type" and looking for similar parallels in history **are** derived from the *relative perspective*. Additionally, analogy (stating how the war is like something else) is contained within this view.

Now, **reread** the "B" selection. **This** question just asks for causes (a dynamic view) without explicitly touching on the legitimacy of the other views. Wouldn't a **fuller** answer—wouldn't a **more** complex **answer**—**approaching** all the perspectives interacting in a historical question constitute the "best" answer? Isn't the mark of a superior student the ability to see from all angles, all implications? Even though the "B" selection is one dimensional, wouldn't the answer take on "more body" and **more** creative energy on the **part** of the student if he answered it **from** all three perspectives?

Really, **an** answer should encompass all **three** views: if multiplicity of perspective is not provided by the question itself (or the examiner), then it must be furnished by the student who consciously **thinks** within this God-given triadic structure. For these reasons, there is very **little** difference between the two **essay** questions, even though one explicitly requires a triadic answer while the **other** (open-ended) longs for one.

At least three points become **readily** apparent:

- (1) **Good writing begins with good question-posing**, provided by **either** the teacher or the student.
- (2) **Exploration of possible answers**, and even a **thesis statement**, **is provided after** structuring (bought via the triads,
- (3) **The thesis is more creatively constructed and more accurately assembled** when the student has first searched through multiple perspectives.

The Triune Judge

Part Three

Peter J. Leithart

There **is** perhaps no more misunderstood area of Christian theology than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Christians tend toward **extremes**. **There** is a tendency among **Reformed** Christians, in reaction to certain trends, to downplay the work of the **Spirit**, though **Warfield** described Calvin as "the theologian of the Holy Spirit." On the other hand, **there** is a current tendency in many churches **toward** shallow mysticism and superficial **charismaticism**. Even **churches** that **are** not officially charismatic often assume and teach a **subjectivistic** doctrine of the spirit.

The Bible, of course, does speak about the Spirit's subjective work in the believer, and there are passages that describe the emotional **effects** of the Spirit's work. It **is by** the Spirit of adoption that we are assured of God's fatherly love for us (Rom 8:15).

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Summary of the Triadic Perspectives

Language Perspective	Student's View Of God's World
PARTICLE	STATIC – subject viewed as "frozen in time: sensory impressions.
WAVE	DYNAMIC — Subject viewed chronologically, in process, or in cause-and-effect sequence.
FIELD	RELATIVE — subject viewed in relationships: comparison and contrast, classification, analogy, illustration Of principle.

By now, I hope that you see that the theoretical composition of the curriculum was a necessary prerequisite in order to build a solid superstructure upon it. With the **preliminaries**—for the present time-already laid as foundational principles, we are **ready** for building specific, **practical** "how to's" into the curriculum.

BOOKS

***Healer of the Nations: Biblical Blueprints for International Relations* by Gary North. Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987. \$7.95(p), \$15.95 (leather). Reviewed by James B. Jordan.**

Evangelical Christians believe that the Bible has the answer for modern problems. What about the problem of international relations? Does the Bible really have anything to say about that?

Certainly. From the Tower of Babel to the Beast of Revelation, the Bible is concerned with the nations, and with international relationships. Israel was told to make no abiding alliances with the heathen nations round about her, and when she disobeyed God's command, He brought judgment upon her. Yet, with God's blessing, Israel did engage in some relations with other nations, especially those that freed God.

How does any of this apply to the United States today, especially since we are now under the New Covenant? Historian Gary North, Ph. D., explores this problem from a thoroughly Biblical and evangelical standpoint. He argues from Scripture that both isolationism and internationalism are wrong. He points out that there is a true internationalism in the oneness of Christ's churchly body on earth, yet there is a true localism in the (hi-ordained) diversity of each culture on earth.

The position North takes is a radical departure from the approach of most political conservatives, for he argues that as the Christian church grows in international oneness, this will create an international Christian cultural consensus, and from this will eventually flow a Christian one world state. With this position, North is retuning to the ancient Christian vision of an international Christian order, a vision lost in recent centuries. North calls for an international Holy Christian Empire, built not through force of arms but through evangelism and persuasion, with Christ as Emperor and His law as international law.

Throughout his treatment, North continually shows how the United States, the State Department in particular, has departed from the Christian principles of international relations that previously govern our affairs. He points out the freedoms responsible for this shift, and what can be done to reverse it.

Beyond this, North takes up such relevant issues as the following: What makes a nation a Christian nation? What are Biblical principles for national defense? What is the Biblical answer to one-world humanism? What kinds of ambassadors and diplomats should a Christian nation have?

Healer of the Nations is a unique contribution to the growing literature of the "New Christian Right," and it is bound to generate controversy and comment for years to come. No thinking Christian can afford not to read and interact with it.

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photograph of your child will do much, allow me to tell you a story Kefa related. It took place in mid-1986. Col. Quaddify, the terrorist dictator of Libya, had just been in the country denouncing America and praising world communism. His visit was widely reported in the print media and carried live on the national radio station. Kefa stood before his children a few days later, while Quaddify's speeches were fresh in their minds. Kefa tried to trick the children by telling them of some people who hated the Ugandans: "They are Americans." He said the children's response was immediate: "No! No!" they shouted, "Americans are our fiends. We have pictures of Americans. They send us soap and toys. They are our fiends."

During this Christmas season, I urge you seriously to consider beginning a regular program of giving to this Ugandan pastor and his orphans. He's not asking for money, or even an item you would have to sacrifice a lot in order to give to him. All he's asking for are the gleanings of your children's lives. Amid the spangle and glitz of this Christmas season, help communicate to your children the red spirit of Christmas—giving to others out of a heart filled with gratitude to God for His supreme Gift.