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A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

Hope for Africa

An AJET Editorial

*I*n his book, *Hope for Africa,*
Professor George Kinoti of the
University of Nairobi, reviewed
the familiar litany of Africa's
woes. Poverty ,disease, war, and
oppression are but a few of the reasons
why Africa still lives with the disgrace
of being the world's poorest continent.
But while Kinoti's list sounds familiar,
his diagnosis of the problems of Africa
has at least one surprising note.
Christianity, says Kinoti, has
contributed to the problem.

How has African Christianity made
matters worse? Kinoti believes that the
Church has "failed to apply the gospel
to the whole of life, limiting it to
spiritual life only." This one
dimensional Christianity "reads the
bible selectively" glossing over those
texts that "talked about justice, peace,
and material well being." Kinoti's hope
for Africa is that the church will truly
become the church of Jesus Christ, a
community of faithful disciples who
"seek to apply the whole of the Word of
God to the whole of life." Only such a
renewed Christianity can "play an
active part in bringing peace and
prosperity to Africa." The Church
should work for the *shalom* of God.
Shalom "encompasses the whole of

human life -- spiritual, intellectual,
social, material." As Kinoti concludes:
"Africa desperately needs *shalom.*"

George Kinoti is not an enemy of
African Christianity. Kinoti writes as a
concerned Christian who believes that
the hope of Africa lies in a renewed
Christian faith that overcomes the
dualism of the past. What is dualism?
Dualism divides the world that God
created into two categories: things that
are inherently evil and things that are
inherently good. Some things are higher
and more spiritual. Other things are
lower and inferior. The task of the
believer is to avoid those parts of
creation that are evil and to limit oneself
to those aspects that are good. This
dualism is seen most clearly in the
either/or thinking that characterizes
much of twentieth century Christianity.

There are actually two kinds of
dualism that plague the African church.
The evangelical version of dualism calls
for an inward Christianity that fails to
apply the gospel to the whole of life.
The liberal form of dualism calls for a
political and social Christianity that
neglects personal salvation and
transformation through faith in Christ.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned against
any version of Christianity that "seeks

Christ without the world or [seeks] the world without Christ." The first error is that of pietistic versions of the faith; the second is that of humanistic versions of the faith.

The true distinction for the believer is not between good and evil aspects of creation and culture. The true issue for the Christian is that of *antithesis*. Everything in creation and culture, though inherently good can be pushed in one of two opposite (antithetical) directions. What are the two opposite poles? Worship of the true and living God or worship of idols. Politics can be as holy as prayer if done for God and not idols. Preaching can be as misdirected as prostitution if done for self glory instead of the glory of God.

To capture a biblical wholeness we need to rediscover the biblical doctrines of creation, fall and redemption. These are the great truths that oppose all dualistic versions of the faith. When African Christianity embraces the truth that all is good by creation; all is misdirected by the fall; and all can be redirected by redemption in Christ, then she will have discovered a comprehensive world view upon which can be built a holistic witness to the gospel.

The articles in this issue seek to promote just such a holistic world view. Watson Omulokoli's study of the strategy of the Church Mission Society in East Africa is a good model for all of us of the search for balance and God-centeredness. Mark Shaw's suggestion that the Kingdom of God, understood in a multi-faceted way, is a useful framework not only for telling the story of African Christianity but also for connecting that story to other branches of church history, particularly in the west. The contributions by Nkem Emeghara and James Plueddemann seek to apply the gospel to the areas of culture and education respectively.

Searching for that third way between the one dimensional Christianity of either the right or the left is not an easy task. Yet in finding that third way lies the hope for African Christianity. And in such a "third way" Christianity, lies the hope of Africa.

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The Church Mission Society in East Africa

Its philosophy and objectives

by Watson Omulokoli

*T*he Anglican Church was introduced in East Africa by the Rev. Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf in 1844. In 1994 East Africa's Anglicans commemorated one hundred and fifty years of its existence in this region. It may be instructive to reflect on the premises on which the Anglican church in East Africa was established. While doing so, we need to bear in mind that churches of the Anglican communion in Africa sprang up from essentially four missionary societies. Of these, one of the more prominent ones was the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which was founded in 1799.

In its operations, the CMS did not function haphazardly. It has some clear-cut philosophy, objectives policies, and practices. As guiding principles, they served as the basis of CMS endeavours in various parts of the world. What was true of CMS work in general applied to specific cases of its efforts in Africa also. With respect to East Africa, there are several instances of its operations which amply illustrate the consistent strand of thought which permeated its early philosophy and objectives.

In its missionary enterprises, the CMS had a tradition which was built on two major planks, "(1) the preaching of the Gospel as a witness; (2) the gathering out of the Ecclesia, the 'called out' Church of God."[1] To varying degrees, both these have persisted throughout the history of the Society.

Whereas in earlier years the first motif of evangelistic thrust was the more prominent of these, during and after the celebrated Secretaryship of Henry Venn, the second one of establishing self-sufficient local churches gained prominence. [2]

By the time the Society entered East Africa, these objectives were prevalent and continued to persist in the period of its establishment. In 1950, in dealing with what he termed the "Living Tradition" of the CMS, the famed missionary expert, Max Warren,

pointed out that whatever institutions the CMS established, it had a cardinal principle which dictated,

> That means must always be subordinated to the ends they serve. The end for which the Society exists is the preaching of the Gospel, the conversion of those who hear, and work, Industrial Missions, Medical work, these and all other activities are means to the supreme end. They are nowhere to be considered as ends in themselves.[3]

Underlying Philosophy of CMS Efforts

The Evangelical founders of the CMS believed that whereas there were many blessings which God had bestowed upon mankind, the greatest of them all was the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." They characterised it as "the sovereign remedy for all the evils of life, and the source of the most substantial and durable benefits."[4] Having experienced the reality of its transforming power in their own lives, they had formed this private but Church-related body through which they could share their message with others in foreign parts of the world. While setting out to impart all the social and civil benefits attendant to the

Christian faith, they were insistent on the supremacy of the saving grace and power of the Gospel. It was for this reason that having outlined the other gains, they went on to state,

> Such are the benefits which Christianity is calculated to diffuse in the world; but these are its least blessings. It not only meliorates the state of man in society, but it saves his soul. It cancels his guilt, reconciles him to God, raises him from death to life, makes him an heir of the kingdom of heaven, and crowns him with glory and immortality.[5]

In their determination they realised that they could not attain their goal without the guidance of God on one hand, and the instrumentality of suitable men on the other. From the beginning they were conscious of the fact that for success in all of their endeavours, they needed what they termed, a "firm reliance on the divine blessings." As to the men who would implement this ideal, it was pointed out that the aim was to send out such men "as unite a fervent zeal with discretion and knowledge; such as have themselves experienced the benefits of the gospel and therefore earnestly desire to make known to their fellow sinners the grace and power of a Redeemer, and

the inestimable blessings of his salvation."[6]

Important as the tasks of preaching the Gospel and winning people to Christ was, in the final analysis, it was considered by the CMS merely as the beginning and not the end of its missionary design. Equally important was the responsibility of organising those who embraced the Christian faith into an indigenous church. While this objective had existed in the Society's strategy from the earliest days, it was highlighted and given fresh prominence from the Secretaryship of Henry Venn, 1841-1872, onwards. In 1868, the Committee's instructions on Nationality urged, "as soon as converts can be gathered into a Christian congregation, let a native church be organised as a national institution;... Train up the native church to self-independence and to self-government from the very first stage of a Christian movement."[7] This was what Venn championed and to which he devoted a good deal of his energies during his tenure of service. As Knight has noted,

> Mr. Venn would, however, have probably ranked, as the chief work of his official life, his careful and prolonged labours for the organisation of Native Churches. All his measures converged to this

point - the formation, wherever the Gospel was proclaimed, of a Native Church, which should gradually be enfranchised from all supervision by a foreign body, and should become, in his own phraseology, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending. .. He carefully discriminated between missionary work carried on by foreigners, and Christianity acclimatised, and so become indigenous in a National Church. The one was the means, the other the end; the one the scaffolding, the other the building it leaves behind when the scaffolding is removed.[8]

Transference of the Theme to East Africa

The history of the CMS in East Africa shows that from the start, those missionaries who were sent there were armed with this knowledge. On arrival on the scene of action they endeavoured, to the best of their ability, to uphold and practice these principles. This is evident from a survey of trends from Krapf's time to the Kenyan coast, through the Uganda era, to the period when the Church was established among Abaluyia of western Kenya. Intent on starting on the right footing,

Krapf made the central purpose of this venture clear when at a meeting with the chiefs of Ribe in 1844 he declared to them that he was 'not a soldier, nor a merchant who had come there to trade, but a Christian teacher who wished to instruct the Wanika and the Galla in the true knowledge of God."[9] Expanding on this theme a little more, he repeated it to the elders at Rabbai in 1845 when he explained to them that he

> was neither a soldier nor a merchant, nor an official employed by the Arabian or English governments, nor a traveler, nor a Mganda nor Mtawi, physician, exorcist, or enchanter; but was a teacher, a book-man, who wished to show the Wanika, the Wakamba, the Galla, and even the Watsumba (Mohammedans) the right way to salvation in the world to come.[10]

Krapf accepted the view that in addition to preaching the Gospel, it was imperative that those who were won to Christ should be organised into churches headed by their own people. It was his view that "so long as our missions are not embodied into a community, however small, so long will Christianity be unable to reveal itself in its complete form, and produce that impression which has always hitherto attracted the heathen."[11]

Furthermore, it was essential that the Christian communities thus formed, in the case of Africa, should come under the leadership of the Africans themselves. It was in this connection that he advocated the necessity of "A black bishop and black clergy."[12]

While the concept of church-building was not as readily discernible in the farewell instructions to the first group of the Society's missionaries to Uganda, all the other characteristics were clearly spelt out as they were urged to put their priorities in the proper perspective. To begin with, as they set out, they were to keep in mind the fact that ultimately, God was the real source of their strength, impetus, and drive in all of their undertakings. To this end they were advised, "Let there be cultivated the deepest sense, and let there be seen the clearest acknowledgement, of your entire dependence for all true and permanent success on God the Holy Spirit."[13]

As to their outlook and approach, they were instructed to endeavour to "be first known in their true character of simple messengers of the Gospel." This was further elaborated on with the charge that from the beginning it was of first importance for every member of the party to be constantly cognizant of and to demonstrate "to all the distinctly

Missionary character of the expedition - that it is not as explorers they go forth, or as travelers, or as mere settlers, but as servants of God, messengers of peace, witnesses for Christ."[14]

Allied to this disposition, they were to keep very prominent in their minds and very clear in all their plans "that the primary object of the Mission is the conversion of the heathen to Christ."[15] With this in mind, once they settled down they were to be alert so that they would not miss any opportunity of presenting the Gospel to those who were under their care. Thus, when they reached Uganda, their priority concern was to convey to Kabaka Mutesa "and his people the message of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ." They were to make it clear to the people they came in contact with that the first desire of their hearts was "to lead them to the Saviour, that they may be reconciled to God and become His children."[16]

When it came to assembling a Christian community, they were cautioned against lowering their aims so much as to "become content with something short of conversion to God." They were to pray and exert earnest effort towards ensuring that their first Christians were Christians indeed. For some time there would be no candidates for baptism, since it was most important that the would-be church members be thoroughly instructed first.

It was especially crucial in the commencement of the Mission to take care that they did not accept adherents hastily and with ease. Only those who showed "evident tokens of being born again of the Holy Spirit" were admitted to the rite of baptism.[17]

Writing about two early missionaries to Uganda, Alexander M. Mackay and Robert H. Walker, a colleague of theirs, Robert P. Ashe, commented that they were wholly given to the "work of preaching a living Christ."[18] In the tumultuous period of 1885-1886, a small, but strong body of Christians had issued out of CMS efforts in Uganda. Speaking of this nucleus, Mackay wrote, "I believe that a work has been begun in Uganda which has its origin in the power of God, and which never can be uprooted by all the forces of evil."[19] On the 18th of March 1882, the first baptisms in Uganda took place when five were admitted to the rite. Then in 1985, twelve men were appointed to form the first church council in a move which proved to be as timely as it was essential.

When Bishop Alfred R. Tucker first entered Uganda in 1890, he expressed his philosophy in the words, "It is a truism, but yet it cannot be repeated too often, that if ever Africa is to be won for Christ it must be by the African himself. ... No! Again I say our hope for Africa (under God) must be in the

African himself."[20] Armed with this belief, he built on the 1885 initiatives of Mackay and his colleagues, when he appointed and licensed six men as Lay Readers in 1891. He followed this up in early 1893 when he selected seven men to undergo training for five months, with a view to ordination as deacons at the end of that period. Eventually, only six of these were ordained on Trinity Sunday, May 28, 1893.

Willis' Faithfulness to the Society's Objectives

When the CMS entered western Kenya from Uganda, it was fortunate to have the Rev. John Jamieson Willis as its pioneer there. After difficult initial days at Vihiga, he took advantage of the lessons learnt there to build strong and lasting foundations at Maseno. All this he did in an attitude of utter dependence upon God as expressed in this words, "We can teach, but God alone can produce that attitude of mind which shall make effective preaching possible."[21]

He was convinced that when preaching the Gospel in a new environment, it was essential to employ the local idiom as the mode of communication. He contended that for effective work, it was "not enough to bring men into the Kingdom of God; more than we realize depends on how we bring men into the Kingdom."[22]

Beyond being faithful in preaching that "Christ Jesus came into the World to save sinners" as the essence of the Gospel, it was of crucial importance that this message be conveyed in terms which were intelligible "from the standpoint not of the teacher, but of the taught." He pointed out how by using parables as stepping-stones, Christ's method was to take "His hearers from the known to the unknown, not by a heroic leap in the dark, but step by step, until almost unconsciously they passed into another world."[23]

It was out of this concern that Willis teamed up with a number of the earliest converts in writing a small book in which they attempted to build a bridge between the indigenous beliefs and the Christian faith. Step by step, this introduction to the gospel was designed to lead the hearers through some cardinal Christian truths, albeit in the people's own thought-pattern. The book dealt with, "First the doctrine of the one God, growing steadily clearer and more exalted through the Old Testament; then the human life of Jesus of Nazareth, bearing its own unique witness; and, last of all, the full message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, Son of Man and eternal Son of God, with all that this involves."[24]

In the course of his labours in western Kenya, Willis aimed at and longed for conversion to Jesus Christ

and inner transformation on the part of those among whom he worked. Of this he wrote in 1908, "That change can only come in one way, by the Spirit of God making a radical change in their hearts. God grant indeed that this, and nothing less may be done, and that soon."[25] Before long, the first signs of this response began to appear, and on May 8, 1909, this received formal recognition when "Seventeen of the older boys stood up before the congregation to their faith in Christ,"[26] as they were admitted as the first Anglican Church catechumens in western Kenya. Then in January, 1910, a further step forward was taken when 14 of these 17 became the first group of Anglican adherents in western Kenya to undergo baptism.

In addition to this faithfulness with regard to the centrality of preaching the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ, Willis considered as of crucial importance the establishment of a full-fledged indigenous Church. As he worked towards this idea, he wrote in 1908, "I look for the time when in all parts of the country we shall have little groups of Christian boys who shall in their own villages, be witnesses of Christ."[27] Before long, he took the bold and commendable step of constituting the senior student leadership in Maseno School into a Native Church Council. This action was consistent not only with the CMS policy, but also with his own philosophy on the matter. It was his belief that whatever else contributed to the success of the exemplary process of Church building in Uganda, the chief factor was indigeneity:

> The methods adopted in the work of evangelization and Christianization. The key to these methods lies, in a word, in the establishment of an indigenous Church. As the consummation of the best British rule, whether in Asia or in Africa, is ultimately self-determination and self-government, so the euthanasia of the Christian mission is the birth of the native Church.
>
> It has been the policy of the C.M.S. Uganda Mission, becoming, as the years passed, more explicit and more articulate, to build up a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-extending native Church.[28]

Central to the establishment of an indigenous Church is the ability to devolve responsibilities upon the local people themselves. In Willis' words, "Not only must Africa be evangelized by the African but that every native Church must be built up by its own sons. This is fundamental. ...That

mission will do best in any country which is most successful in developing the resources of the Christian community of the country itself."[29] But beyond the general Christian community, there is the particular need of an indigenous leadership. From this point of view, it is true that "The primary need of a native Church is a native ministry" to direct and manage the various facets of the Church's life.[30] As Willis saw it, apart from the clergy, other useful personnel in this category were, Lay Readers, catechists, and teachers. The successful development of this indigenous leadership would help the Mission achieve its penultimate objective of issuing into an indigenous Church.

Summary and Conclusion:

It is clear that in its operations throughout the world, the CMS followed certain premises and principles. What was true in this general scope was applied in the case of East Africa when the work of the Society was introduced and established there. This began with the Rev. Dr. Johann Ludwig Krapf when he arrived in East Africa in 1844. He was very clear in his mind about the twin emphases of the primacy of evangelism and the ultimate goal of establishing an indigenous African church. Secondly, when the first group of CMS missionaries to Uganda were sent there these cardinal principles of the Society work were strongly impressed upon them. From the time they arrived there in 1877, these objectives were played out as is expressed by Alexander M. Mackay and the Rt. Rev. Alfred R. Tucker. In the third instance, there is the example of Western Kenya where CMS work was introduced was introduced by the Rev. John Jamieson Willis in 1905. Concise in theory and disciplined in actual practice, he promoted evangelism as of first importance and at the same time was always alert to keep the goal of an indigenous African church in view. Thi was in line with the enduring living tradition of the Church Missionary Society.

[1]Eugene Stock, The History of the CMS: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work. 3 Vols. (London:CMS 1989), Vol. 2, p. 82.

[2]Ibid., p. 83

[3]Max A. G. Warren, Unfolding Purpose: An Interpretation of the Living Tradition which is CMS. (London, CMS, 1950, pp. 9-10.

[4]Church Missionary Society, "Account of a Society for Missions to Africa and the East, Instituted by Members of the Established Church, 1799," p. 2.

[5]Ibid., p. 4.

[6]Ibid., p. 11.

[7]William Knight, Memoir of the Rev. H. Venn: The Missionary Secretariat of Henry Venn, B.D. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1880), p. 285.

[8]Ibid., pp. 276-277.

[9]J. Lewis Krapf, Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa (Second Edition with a new introduction by R. C. Bridges). (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968), p. 137 (First Edition, 1860).

[10]Ibid., pp. 145-146.

[11]Ibid., p. 499.

[12]Eugene Stock, History of the CMS, 4 Vols. Vol. 2, p. 462.

[13]Church Missionary Society, "Instructions Delivered by the Committee of the Church Missionary Society to the Members of the Mission Party Proceeding to the Victoria Nyanza," 1876, p. 27.

[14]Ibid., p. 20.

[15]Ibid., p. 26.

[16]Ibid., p. 26.

[17]Ibid., p. 17.

[18]Mackay's Sister, J.W.H. A.M. Mackay: Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society to Uganda. (The Unabridged first Edition with a New Introductory Note by D.A. Low) (London: Frank Cass & Co. Lit., 1970), p. 316. (First Published in 1890.)

[19] Ibid., p. 288.

[20]Alfred R. Tucker, Eighteen Years in Uganda and East Africa, 2 Vols. (London: Edward Arnold, 19-8), Vol. 1, pp. 113-114.

[21]J. J. Willis, "The Appeal to the African," in The Church Missionary Review, January, 1912, p. 29.

[22]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[23]Ibid., p. 30.

[24]Ibid., p. 33.

[25]J.J. Willis, "Willis Papers" (London: Lambeth Palace Library Microfilm) 11 November 1908, p. 214.

[26]Ibid., 26 May 1909, p. 217.

[27]Ibid., 15 March 1908. p. 197.

[28]J. J. Willis, An African Church in Building (London: CMS 1925), pp. 5-6.

[29]Ibid., p. 37.

[30]Ibid., p. 68.

The Kingdom of God in Africa:

Or How to get Africa into the Western Church History Curriculum

by Mark Shaw

*T*he time is early in the next century.[1] A first year seminary student, taking Church History 101 at a North American seminary, reads the concluding paragraph of her textbook's chapter on the Reformation. The paragraph goes something like this:

"Concurrent with the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation in Europe was the equally significant Ethiopian Reformation in Africa. This Reformation was the inspiration of Emperor Galawdewos (1522-1559) who after defeating the Muslims and restoring to the church many who had undergone forced conversions to Islam, turned his attention to the renewal of Ethiopian Christianity. While enlightened in his attitude towards Rome, Galawdewos strongly opposed the aggressive attacks on Ethiopian Christianity by men like the Jesuit, Oveido. Galawdewos was excommunicated by Rome for his heroic stand. The Emperor's bold actions were crucial for the subsequent history of Ethiopian Christianity in particular and African Christianity in general, a Christianity which now claims nearly half of all Christians in the world." The student closes her text and rushes off to her next class--Asian Christian theology and its impact on Europe.

This picture of the future may be a bit farfetched for those aware of the glacial pace with which the discipline of church history institutes change. It is, however, the possibility of just such a scenario that has drawn many of us to ponder the questions raised by Lamin Sanneh, A.F. Walls and others in recent years.[2]

Professor Sanneh in particular, in his paper "World Christianity and the

Teaching of History" has asked the key questions with which we must wrestle: "What would church history ... look like if it takes in world Christianity?"[3] and "What would it take to make the transition into such new fields effective and long-lasting?"[4] These are strategic questions for those of us concerned about progress in the doing of Church history. These are questions deserving of thoughtful answers.

The burden of this paper is to suggest an approach to African Church history that offers a partial and preliminary answer to these two questions.

Specifically I would like to make two points. The first is the value of the concept of the kingdom of God for providing a possible point of contact between the Africa Christian story and the Western one. The second point is the contribution of H.R. Niebuhr's *Kingdom of God in America* in showing us how to go about doing this, that is to write church history in a way that can exploit this point of contact and get Africa a bigger share of the Church history texts of the next century. *The thrust of this paper is that a kingdom approach to African church history might help us make a transition into this new field of a truly multicultural and global Church history that will be both "effective and long-lasting."*

I begin by noting that African history has been changing the university even while being slighted by the seminary. We who are students of African church history can only look with envy at how much the African continent has contributed to the rewriting of world history in the academy. What kind of impact has Africa had on the writing of secular history? Steven Feierman in his essay "African Histories and the Dissolution of World History" argues that "the emergence of African history . . . has changed our understanding of general history, and of Europe's place in the world, in profound ways."[5] Feierman points out that the most obvious change is the new academic consciousness that a eurocentric view of the world is no longer credible in the writing of world history.

Feierman's comments remind us of the importance of Fernand Braudel and the *annales* school in pioneering this global perspective. Braudel was an early pioneer in developing a non-eurocentric perspective. Witness his entertaining *History of Civilizations* where he devoted the first two thirds of his survey to non-European civilizations.[6] What permitted Braudel to rise above the academic habits of his contemporaries and see the cultures of the world as possessing an equally fascinating story to tell? Braudel

eveals his secret. Good history for Braudel is not in comparing civilizations as much as discovering their own uniqueness. He described this as looking within a civilization for its "key." This may seem, he wrote, like "a simplicity that distorts the truth" but it is instead " a simplicity that is clarity, the light of intelligence."[7] When we look at Niebuhr this insight of Braudel will be most useful.[8]

In light of Feierman's comments and Braudel's pioneering approaches of thirty years ago, the sluggishness of Church historians to similarly revise their story lines is a discouraging contrast. I can only applaud the global scope of a Church history survey such as Clouse, Pierard and Yamauchi, *Two Kingdoms.*[9] Yet such a survey seems to be the exception rather than the rule. More characteristic, I think of the current church history mind set is Kee, Hanawalt, Lindberg, Seban and Noll, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History.*[10] This is a book with many virtues. Yet the book tries to tell the whole Christian story by relegating African, Asian and Latin American Christianity to an epilogue.

This simply will not do. Numbers alone should justify a new prominence for African Church history. Elizabeth Isichei, in her recent synthesis of African church history, points out that if the projected figure of 393 million

African Christians by the year 2000 is correct then "1 in 5 of all Christians would be in Africa."[11] African Christianity is more than just statistics but such numbers should awaken church historians of the West from their dogmatic slumber.

I would like to follow up on Braudel's bit of wisdom that the way to write about history is to search for a key--the simple truth at the heart of the story that is not "a simplicity that distorts the truth" but is instead " a simplicity that is clarity." Allow me, however, to amend Braudel slightly. If we expect the localized church histories of the younger churches to find a place in the story of World Christianity we must find the key that fits not one door but two. We must find a key that opens the heart of African Christianity but also unlocks a gate to the consciousness of the Western Church. We must ask the question: What is at the heart of the African story that can touch the heart of the western church story?

Some might object that church history should be concerned with the creation of a clear narrative of events and not succumb to the western, and typically North American mania, with "fixing things." To such a viewpoint, searching for keys, common issues and problems sounds more like sociology that history. My reply to such an objection is that some of the best

history being written today is concerned with problem-solving. Basil Davidson's *Black Man's Burden* is one example where the problem of the modern nation-state is explored in a comparative way using African and Eastern European examples.[12] David Hackett Fischer's study of American history, *Albion's Seed*, is a second example where a cultural history of British and American views of freedom is used to illuminate social conflict and development in the American story.[13] For Church historians, Martin Marty is a third example. His *Pilgrims in their Own Land*, tells the story of American Religion as a study in pluralism and spiritual consumerism.[14] The problem of spiritual restlessness ties together the divergent expressions of religion in America and functions for Marty as Braudel's key to unlock the meaning of the story. With David Fischer then I argue that the detached objectivity of the old narrative history should be replaced by a problem solving approach to history that stresses themes and issues while still preserving the narrative strengths of the old history in what Fischer calls "a braided narrative."[15] We will not get the African story into the bigger Christian story in any lasting way unless we write more than bare chronologies or chronicles and find the key that unlocks the two doors. Let me suggest a key

and then show how Professor Niebuhr sheds light on its use.

The Kingdom of God as a common Key

What might that key look like? I must make it clear that I think there are a number of keys or points of contact that would work. The first possible point of contact is *church growth*. African Christians are interested in their own church growth and Western Christians, particularly where Christianity may be declining are eagerly interested in the question. Here surely is a common ground. Older studies which are still relevant used this key of world wide expansion and interest in the dynamics of growth. This is the key that C.P. Groves and Kenneth Latourette used in their multivolume surveys.[16] This is the key that Neill used in his enduring single volume study.[17] Peter Falk's *Growth of the Church in Africa* also used this key but with less success.[18] The major drawback to this approach today is the stigma associated with the missionary Christianity these studies tend to emphasize. Charges of religious imperialism in this Post-colonial era make the theme of expansion less attractive than other options, though I would argue that it is still valid and that additional studies along this line are needed.

A second point of contact between African Christianity and the wider church is in the area of *ecumenism*. The union of the fractured body of Christ is one of the crucial issues for many churchmen around the world. Leslie Newbigin has stressed this repeatedly. John McManner's *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* adopts this ecumenical perspective, as John Taylor's closing essay makes clear.[19] In that spirit a full chapter is given to African Christianity.

Lamin Sanneh's interest in pluralism in general and Christianity's remarkable ability to adapt and renew a wide variety of cultures principally though not solely through *vernacular translation* is a third promising common key or point of contact.[20] This theme is of broad appeal and relevance. African Christianity provides a particularly useful test case for the examination of this issue in Professor Sanneh's writings.

Despite these promising keys, it is a fourth one that has captured my imagination--that of *eschatology*. Leslie Newbigin has written about this with insight and eloquence. I refer to his books, *Sign of the Kingdom,* and *Foolishness to the Greeks*. Both books underscore the teleological crisis of West. Newbigin argues that the greatest challenge facing western churches is dealing and communicating with a culture that has lost its eschatology. "We shall not be wrong . . ." he wrote,"if we take the abandonment of teleology as the key to understanding of nature for our primary clue to understanding the whole of the vast changes in the human situation." [21] Why is this the case? The collapse of an eschatological framework makes it impossible to explain things in terms of purpose. Modern man can only use the language of causation which treats humans like machines or plants and is ultimately dehumanizing. The old language of purpose, provided by Christian eschatology, gave dignity and meaning to the West. The recovery of the theme of the Kingdom of God and its eschatological import is therefore crucial to both the renewal of the West and the churches evangelization of Western man. As Newbigin states: "A true understanding of the last things is the first essential."[22]

The Western church has felt this loss of teleology and has at times followed the culture into its malaise. David Bosch has strengthened Newbigin's insight by stressing the Church's need to rediscover the kingdom of God. In his *Transforming Mission,* Bosch argued that the recovery of the eschatological nature of the church and its mission is one of the crucial needs of Twentieth century theology.[23] "In every Christian

tradition,"declared Bosch,"and in every continent we are still in the midst of a movement to reformulate a theology of mission in the light of an authentic eschatology."[24] Bosch further insisted that without a kingdom framework true Christian mission is not possible. "It is because God already rules and because we await the public manifestation of his rule that we may, in the here and now, be ambassadors of his kingdom. Christians can never be people of the status quo."[25] Bosch thus calls for a rediscovery of kingdom thinking in our understanding of both secular and salvation history.[26]

While the West gropes towards the importance of the kingdom in understanding both Christianity and culture in the West a similar movement is afoot in Africa. In 1980 Dr. E. A. Adeolu called for a new church history that went beyond Marxism and capitalistic analysis and did "for our time what Augustine did for his: discern the mysterious intermingling of the City of God with the earthly city."[27] More recently, Nigerian theologian Ukachuwu Chris Manus, called for a new kingdom emphasis in African Christianity in order to promote social justice. "The reality of the kingdom of God," writes Manus," provides men and women of all ages the vista to judge this world and to renew it through their total commitment to peace, justice,

freedom."[28] Justice is served by a kingdom consciousness.

So also is ecumenicity. The need for a viable ecumenical perspective has led African church historians like Ogbu Kalu towards a kingdom framework for African Christianity. Kalu called for a rediscovery of the kingdom framework in order to move beyond the parochialism of institutional church history. "The basic assumption of Church history is that the Kingdom of God is here among men, providing enormous opportunities for renewal and reshaping of individual and communal lives."[29] While we must avoid the triumphalism that such an approach suggests, Kalu feels that a kingdom perspective would actually lift the story above local and denominational biases and illumine "the ways in which the community sees herself and the intruding presence of the Kingdom."[30]

In summary, the crisis of meaninglessness in the West, if we accept Newbigin's analysis, is due to a loss of eschatology. The problems of injustice and sectarianism in Africa have led various African theologians and church historians to call for the recovery of a kingdom eschatology. The kingdom of God thus seems to be a useful key that unlocks two doors.

But how does one move from the need in both Africa and the West to see history through kingdom eyes and the

actual doing of church history in a way that successfully utilizes the kingdom motif? This is the contribution of H. R. Niebuhr.

The contribution of H.R. Niebuhr

The 1937 publication of *The Kingdom of God in America*, the year before he began teaching at Yale, was a landmark in the personal pilgrimage of H.R. Niebuhr. In this seminal work, recently republished by Wesleyan University press with an appreciative introductory essay by Martin Marty, Niebuhr worked out more fully his rediscovery of the sovereignty of God that had swept over him in the thirties and marked his break with liberalism.[31] This work was also a landmark in the interpretation of American church history.[32]

Niebuhr contended that the concept of the Kingdom had played a unique shaping role in American Christianity similar to the way that the Vision of God had impacted Medieval Christianity.[33] He recognized that the Biblical concept of the kingdom had three distinct but interconnected elements: God's sovereign rule which is tied to the doctrine of providence; Christ's redemptive reign over hearts which is tied to the doctrine of salvation; and the coming kingdom as an earthly utopia which is tied to eschatology and ethics:

The Christian faith in the kingdom of God is a threefold thing. Its first element is confidence in the divine sovereignty which, however hidden, is still the reality behind and in all realities. A second element is the conviction that in Jesus Christ the hidden kingdom was not only revealed in a convincing fashion but also began a special and new career among men, who had rebelled against the true law of their nature. The third element is the direction of life to the coming of the kingdom in power....[34]

What was most striking about Niebuhr's model was the suggestion that the American church in different periods of her history tended to put more emphasis on one of the aspects of the kingdom to the neglect of the others. Niebuhr gave some examples. The seventeenth century New England puritans emphasized the kingdom as the sovereign rule of God over all of life and attempted to witness to that reality by building a theocracy (or more accurately a theonomy) where the word of God ruled every sphere or institution of society. The very success of their witness led to a rigid institutionalizing of the theocracy which was unable to withstand the forces of change that

occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The church then moved from the old witness to the kingdom in response to the demands of changing America and bore a fresh witness to the kingdom by emphasizing the redemptive reign of Christ over hearts. The awakenings and revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries created an evangelical movement that emphasized converting individuals instead of building theocracies. But the changes brought on by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (urbanization, immigration, religious pluralism, secularization) led to the social gospel which interpreted the kingdom as an earthly utopia brought about by the steady advance of human progress.

The institutionalizing of this liberal vision of the kingdom has likewise led to discontent and restlessness in the church for the kingdom can never be equated with any human institution or structure.

Niebuhr was critical of this broken witness to the kingdom and called for the restoration of the whole gospel of the kingdom because "the three notes of faith in the sovereignty, the experience of the love of Christ and hope of ultimate redemption are inseparable."[35] Niebuhr was particularly critical of liberal Christianity with its focus on the earthly kingdom to the neglect of the cross of Christ. "There was no way",argued Neibuhr," toward the coming kingdom save the way taken by a sovereign God through the reign of Jesus Christ."[36]

Niebuhr's ideas continue to intrigue American historians. The most aggressive attempt to apply Niebuhr's framework is found in the work of Brown historian, William McGloughlin, who has asserted that all American history may be related to the core values of the kingdom:

> From its first settlements, not only in Pilgrim Plymouth but in almost every colony, America has been a utopian experiment in achieving the Kingdom of God on earth. Our Revolution was justified on these terms in 1776. Our history has been essentially the history of one long millenarian movement. Americans, in their cultural mythology, are God's chosen, leading the world to perfection. Every awakening has revived, revitalized, and redefined that culture core.[37]

What is remarkable about this statement is how easily it applies, with just a few word changes, to Ethiopian, Afrikaner, Zionist or African charismatic forms of Christianity.

More recently, Evangelical historian, Ronald Wells, has attempted

to broaden this kingdom approach by using it as a framework for understanding all of Western civilization.[38] For Wells "the story of humanity in the West is a story of trying to bring together what St. Augustine called the two cities, of God and of 'Man.'"[39] He calls this way of seeing history "the kingdom vision" and sees the basic plot of Western history as the gap between kingdom ideals and human realities. When this gap becomes too great civilization is thrown into a crisis between its beliefs and its behavior. This kingdom perspective helps us to see history as in ongoing tension between the "already and the not yet", between the provisional nature of today and the final reality when the Kingdom of God will be consummated.

But does this perspective apply to Africa? South African historian John de Gruchy has used Niebuhr's categories to unlock the meaning of Church history in that region of the continent: "As the struggle of the church in North America was a struggle for the kingdom of God, so, too, the struggle of the church in South Africa is for the kingdom of God in another segment of world history. Indeed, as we look back on the history of South Africa, and the theologies that have shaped and interpreted that history, the cruciality of the kingdom emerges strongly and resembles in an almost uncanny way the story of the kingdom of God in America."[40]

As I have taught African Church history over the years in Kenya, de Gruchy's words have grown in their significance. I would suggest that the story of African Christianity not only in South Africa but in all the continent "resembles in an almost uncanny way the story of the kingdom of God in America."

What would the story of African Christianity look like if told from a kingdom perspective? Cutting across denominations and institutions are conflicting but ultimately complimentary views of the kingdom. In the first six hundred years the theocratic idea of the kingdom prevailed with Christian political kingdoms emerging in Egypt, North Africa, Nubia and Ethiopia. In the African middle age, from the rise of Islam until the coming of the Dutch to South African in the seventeenth century, rival theocracies clashed. Kingdoms of Allah and Mungu locked horns with the kingdoms of Christendom, the Portuguese and the Dutch. Caught in the middle of this kingdom rivalry were the African Christian theocracies of Nubia which collapsed and Ethiopia which survived. Just as the great clash of theocracies was coming to an end a new vision of the kingdom was rising in the west on

the wings of revivalism and the Clapham sect.

The evangelical concept of the kingdom turned its back on theocracy and emphasized personal regeneration and social transformation through transformed men and women. The twin movements of nineteenth century evangelical activism, the antislavery campaign and the missions movement shaped a new kind of African Christianity. Whether the *Krio* Christianity of the recaptives of West Africa, or the *kitoro* Christianity of the fugitive slaves of East Africa, this new kingdom vision as the redemptive rule of Christ over hearts made major inroads.

As Africans shaped their response to missionary Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they did so in kingdom terms. The Zionism of South Africa refers to more than the location in Zion, Illinois, from which the original visionary, John Alexander Dowie, hailed. It was a consciousness that the Kingdom of God was more than just the Sovereign rule of God and the redemptive rule Christ. It was also the kingdom on earth. The search for a sacred place that is at the heart of so many African indigenous churches reflects this third aspect of the kingdom. Since independence, the kingdom on earth theme has come to mean a struggle for social justice

against apartheid, capitalism and the corruption of Africa's kleptocracies.

Like the kingdom of God in America though the vision has been a dominant framework for meaning and action, no one group, no single institution or denomination has been able to grasp the fullness of the kingdom as the sovereign God's rule through the redemptive lordship of Christ to hasten the coming of his kingdom of justice and love.

What would be the strengths of such an approach? Let me list three. 1). The kingdom approach gives African Church history a meaningful point of contact with Western Church history. 2) The kingdom approach advances the Protestant principle that no one group, theology, church or denomination is ultimate or final. Only the ideal of the kingdom is transcendent. All earthly witnesses to the kingdom are finite and fallen. Such a perspective keeps us from an unwelcome triumphalism. 3) The kingdom approach moves us past the impasse so often seen in the writing of African church history between so-called missionary, nationalistic and ecumenical approaches and offers a fourth way forward.[41]

Conclusion

I have tried to answer in a provisional way the question of how to get Africa's story into our western Church history curriculum. I have presented my

conviction, shared with Howard Snyder and others, that "one cannot understand Church History without grasping the role the kingdom concept has played."[42] I have further suggested that H. R. Niebuhr's tripartite understanding of the kingdom in *The Kingdom of God in America,* offers a model as to how such a perspective might be applied to Africa. The kingdom perspective is valuable because it is a point of contact with a Western church that desperately needs to recapture the sense of meaning and purpose that the Kingdom of God has provided in the past. Such a perspective has meaning in the West as Niebuhr and others have shown. Such a perspective has meaning in Africa as Augustine, de Gruchy, Adeolu, Manus and Kalu have insisted. It is not "a simplicity that distorts the truth" but it is instead " a simplicity that is clarity, the light of intelligence." Telling the African story using a kingdom perspective may in fact be the common key that unlocks two doors. It may hasten the day when African Church history reshapes the western church history syllabus, the day when Galawdewos takes his place along side Luther in the story of a wider sixteenth century Reformation.

Ali Mazrui, writing in *The African Condition*, presents Africa as the continent of paradox.[43] He offers a number of those paradoxes to the reader. Africa is "the first habitat of man but the last to be made truly habitable." Africans "are not the most brutalized of peoples but are probably the most humiliated in modern history." It "is not the smallest of the continents but it is probably the most fragmented."

Mazrui offers many more of these contrasts as a way of helping the western mind understand the mystery and the meaning of Africa. The Africa Church may contribute yet one more powerful paradox that Mazrui overlooked. John Mbiti once wrote that African traditional religion lacked a sense of the future. My studies in African Church history have convinced me that whatever the case with Traditional religion, African Christianity, from Ethiopian kings and Zionist prophets, to Dispensational missionaries and liberation theologians, has been deeply impacted by the eschatology of the kingdom. What African tradition did not provide, African Christianity has abundantly supplied--a powerful kingdom eschatology. The greatest future paradox of Africa may well be that the continent without a strong indigenous eschatology may become the continent which renews the kingdom consciousness of the world.

[1] This article was originally presented as a paper at the 1995 Yale-Edinburgh Conference on the History of Christian Missions.

[2] Cf. the pioneering essay by A.F. Walls, "Africa's Place in Christian History", in John Pobee (ed.) *Religion in a Pluralist Society*, (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 181-189.

[3] Lamin Sanneh, " "World Christianity and the teaching of History", unpublished paper, Yale-Edinburgh Conference, 1994, 4.

[4] Ibid, 5.

[5] In Bates, Mudimbe and O'Barr, *Africa and the Disciplines*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 182.

[6] Fernand Braudel, *History of Civilizations* (Allen Lane, 1994).

[7] Ibid, xxv.

[8] In the opinion of some the *annales* approach has become derailed in recent decades by what Harold Bloom has called "the ideologies of resentment." Fernand Braudel himself has admitted that this approach was "overhwlemed by its own success." David Hackett Fischer of Brandeis notes that "Instead of becoming a synthesizing discipline, it disintegrated into many special fields—women's history, labor history, environmental history, the history of aging, the history of child abuse, and even gay history—in which the work became increasingly shrill and polemical." Cf. David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix..

[9] Robert Clouse, Richard Pierard, Edwin Yamauchi, *Two Kingdoms: The Church and Culture through the Ages*,(Chicago: Moody Press, 1993).

[10] Howard Kee, Emily Hanawalt, Carter Lindberg, Jean-Loup Seban and Mark Noll, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History* (New York: MacMillan, 1991).

[11] Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*,(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 1.

[12] Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*, (Nairobi: EAEP, 1992).

[13] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[14] Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*, (New York: Viking Penguin, 1984).

[15] Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, xi.

[16] C. P. Groves, *Planting of the Church in Africa*, 4 volumes (London: Lutterworth, 1948); Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 volumes, (New York: Harper and Row, 1937).

[17] Stephen Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, (London: Penguin, 1960).

[18] Peter Falk, *The Growth of the Church in Africa*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).

[19] John McManner, (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[20] Cf. *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989) and *Encountering the West: Christianity and the Global Cultural Process* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993).

[21] Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 34.

[22] Ibid, 134.

[23] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 498.

[24] Ibid, 508.

[25] Ibid, 508.

[26] Ibid. Note that Bosch does not really accept (although he uses) the distinction between secular and salvation history: "There are not two histories, but there are two ways of understanding history" (508).

[27] Dr. E. A. Adeolu, "A Research Proposal", *The Ecumenical Review*, 32.2 (April 1980), 127.

[28] Ukachukwu Chris Manus, *Christ the African King*, (Frankfort: Peter Lang, 1993), 164.

[29] Ogbu Kalu, "Doing Church History", unpublished lecture, Yale Divinity School Archives, n.d., 2.

[30] Ibid, 12.

[31] See Niebuhr's discription of this change of perspective in "Reformation: Continuing Imperative", part five, "How I Changed My Mind" series, *The Christian Century*, LXXVII, No. 9, (March 2, 1960), 248.

[32] A recent exploration of this theme first sounded by Niebuhr is David Lenn Jeffrey *The Kingdom of God in America: An Historical Analysis and a Contemporary Inquiry* (Boston College, 1981).

[33] H. R. Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1937), 20.

[34] Ibid, 88.

[35] Ibid, 127.

[36] Ibid, 27.

[37] W. McGloughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings and Reform*,(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 19.

[38] Ronald Wells, *History Through the Eyes of Faith: Western Civilization and the Kingdom of God*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989).

[39] Ibid, 27.

[40] John DeGruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 199.

[41] For a discussion of this current impasse in African Church historiography see Ogbu Kalu, "African Church Historiography: an Ecumenical Perspective" in Kalu, (ed.), *African Church Historiography: an Ecumenical Perspective*, (Bern: Lukas Vischer,1988), 9-27.

[42] Howard Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 22.

[43] Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition* (London: Heinemann, 1980).

The Osu Caste System in Nigeria:

A Christian Response

by Nkem Emeghara

*T*wo schools of thought concerning the applicability of the term "caste" exist among social anthropologists.[1] The first school recommends the application of caste system only to Hinduism and its ritual requirements. Caste system, according to this school of thought is unique to India or at least to Southeast Asia.[2]

The second school of thought defines caste in terms of certain structural features which are found not only in Hindu India but in a number of other societies as well. This school of thought identifies caste on a wider area: The Arabian Peninsula, Japan, Polynesia, North Africa, East Africa, Haiti, Aboriginal North America and Southern United States.[3] West Africa is excluded.

In this paper the caste system practised among the Igbos of Nigeria, West Africa is examined. This indicates that West Africa should be added to the list of areas where caste exists in the world.

Kroeber gives us a cross-cultural definition of caste system from the point of view of social stratification. According to him, caste is:

> An endogamous and hereditary sub-division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank of or social status or esteem in comparison with other such sub-divisions.[4]

Kroeber sees caste as examples of ranked aggregates of people which are usually prescribed by birth and disallowing an individual mobility. He produced this definition from his study of social stratification in some societies. However, to a Hindu, caste is more than social stratification. It is also a spiritual sliding scale which has deep religious significance. The lowest in the scale

being the *Pariah*, out castes, untouchables, whom Mahatma Gandhi sympathetically called *'Harjans'* or 'People of God' (Hari).[5] Where a person falls within the scale is directly related to the type of life the person lived in his previous life, a concept rooted in the Law of *Karma*, and *samsara*.

Among the Igbos of Nigeria, caste is conceived in terms of relationship to the spirit forces (*arusi*) rather than laid down by social stratification. This is because anybody can become part of a different caste. There are three castes recognized: the *osu*, *ume* and the *diala* (*ogamadi*). The *osu* and *ume* are those people who for certain reason have left the boundary of the *diala* (freeborn) into the spirit (*arusi*) realm. Being previously *diala* (free born), they have become taboo. The community, therefore, treats them as taboo just as one would treat any thing dedicated to the gods. To understand the Igbo concept of *osu*, it is necessary to look at Igbo world view briefly.

Igbo World View

The world view of a people provides answers to questions about the peoples understanding of the place and relationship of man with the universe in general. It gives insight into a peoples political, religious, social and psychological convictions.[6] Knowing a people's world view provides an

understanding of how they evaluate life both temporal and non-temporal which in turn provides them a charter for action and a guide to their behaviour.

First, to the Igbo, the universe is a conglomeration of forces. The universe came into existence not by chance but through the handwork of a creator. The creator populated the universe with numerous spirit forces which are in constant communion with man. Thus, the visible and the invisible world are identified and are in constant interaction. Both worlds are in this universe. The only difference is that one is visible while the other is invisible. [8] This constant interaction between the visible and the invisible makes human life and nature to be regarded as sacred. They are under the governance of the creator and the numerous divinities. [9] The visible world is therefore subordinate to the invisible world. Man, who is chief of the visible world is less powerful and seeks the help of the invisible (spirit) world. To receive favour from the spirits, he strives to do their will, obeying their laws and carrying out their instructions which are given through priests and oracles. [10] Man can also influence the spirit world and the deities through sacrifices and prayers. The deities and spirits are expected to intervene and bring good fortunes to their devotees or misfortune if their laws are flouted. It is thus

through ritual that the visible world becomes sacred as it interacts with the invisible.

The Igbo generally recognize four categories of spiritual beings. *Chukwu* is the name for the Supreme being and most powerful of all the spirits, the others are deities (*Mmuo*), Spirit forces (*arusi*), the ancestors (*ndichee*).

Chukwu is also called *Chineke* (The spirit that creates), *Chi ukwu* (The great spirit), *Onyeokike* (The one who creates), *Eze okike* (The king of creation). He is the source of human life, animals, rain, crops, etc. He gives every human part of Himself called *Chi* which is the "destiny spirit" or "Spirit double" or the man which remains throughout life. *Chukwu* interacts with man through this *Chi*. The greater the potency of this *chi* in a man, the greater will be his achievement and fame. Because *Chukwu* is the source of human, every one belongs to him (as free born *diala*) consequently, human being is sacred in this sense. The deities referred to as *Mmuo* come next to *Chukwu*. They have been variously referred to as sons, servants, manifestations, reflections, or even metaphors of *Chukwu*. They are believed to have been assigned different functions by *Chukwu*. Some are thought to have their abode in the sky as *Igwe* (the sky deity). The sun deity and the sky deity are the same. The sun deity is

commoner in the southern part of Igboland, while the sky deity is used in the North to refer to the same deity. All the deities are answerable to God. They claim no direct ownership of man.

The spirit forces are called *arusi*. These are non-human spirits which have not attained the status of deities. They lack distinct personalities and cult equal to that of the deities. They are thought to act irrationally sometimes and may be manipulated by those people who know their secrets for good and for evil. Every man tries to win the favour of the *arusi* through ritual sacrifices. All mishaps on an individual and community are blamed on the *arusi*. Their nature is not known for certain, but they are regarded as possessing superhuman powers to help or to hinder. No one dares toy with them no matter the relationship as they can turn even against their devotees. They can intervene on behalf of those who are not their devotees against those who are known to be their devotees. Some of the *arusi* are known to be inherently wicked. Some of these move in groups and may attack individual families or communities. [11] They have no shrines, no cults, nor priests. They are known to do little good but great harm. Thus are they singularly categorized as wicked spirits. They are anonymous and one dares not swear

with them falsely. They inflict suffering at the least provocation.[12]

Some of the evil spirits have been connected with age groups. The *umuaro* are evil spirits of the dead children. *Ogbunuke* are evil spirits of dead young men. *Akalogeli* are evil spirits of dead adults who died childless. *Ogbanje* are evil spirits of the born-to-die children. The *Ogbanje* spirits are the most dreaded by young mothers. The aim of the *Ogbanje* is to torment parents with the pangs of constant births and deaths of their children leaving them childless and frustrated even to the end of childbearing age.[13]

Perhaps, the most wicked of the *arusi* is the one called *Ekwensu*. It is regarded as the arch enemy of *Chukwu* whose purpose is to frustrate the goodness of *Chukwu* and to disseminate evil.[14] The stock in trade of *Ekwensu* is violence and disruption of peace. Thus, any person who is given to violent acts is regarded as being possessed by *Ekwensu*.[15] It is the spirit of warfare. The spirit who brings about chaos. He is the destroyer similar to the Hindu *Shiva* and the *Angra Mainya* of Zoroastrianism.

The fourth category of Spiritual beings is the ancestors (*ndichie*). The cult of the ancestor is directly related with Igbo concept of time.[16] For the people time is associated with events. Thus, there is no pronounced past and present. Space is composed of three dimensions: the sky, the earth, and the underworld. Man has a cyclic life of birth, death and reincarnation. Death is not the termination of life. Man goes into the spirit world as ancestor to come back into the earth (the visible world) in order to live another cycle of life. The ancestral world is conceived as similar to this visible human world and the ancestors are still regarded as members of the family and take active interest in their kith and kin. The requirements for ancestorhood include: Old age, off-spring, good moral and religious life, funeral rites following a good or a natural death. Death by suicide, accident, disease, etc., are regarded as bad death, and victims of such death are not given funeral rites and consequently can not become ancestors. Since they are not ancestors they turn into ghosts and become malevolent.

Ancestors, protect the family, relay their prayers to *Chukwu*, and ensure good moral life within the family. They are likable to the Persian *Fravashis* and Japanese *Kami*. Shrines are set up for them where libation and sacrifices of food offering are made to them. They are expected to reincarnate into the family to repopulate the family of their children. It is through the *eke* (ancestral guardian) that the ancestor comes into the family and with it the child is connected with his ancestors. It is

believed that *Chukwu* assigns the *eke* to individual child as He wills. It is also *Chukwu* who determines which ancestor should reincarnate.

In summary we see that to the Igbo, man is in constant interaction with *Chukwu*, the deities, and with the ancestors as well as the *arusi*. He is also in communion with his fellow man within the community of the living. His family includes the ancestors and those yet to be born. In his dealings with these forces, he is expected to live reverently of these forces. There is a boundary which he must not cross. He must not seek to join the family of the spirit while in flesh and must not offend the ancestors. Man remains man while spirit remains spirit (*arusi*). If he is son of man, he must not change citizenship by joining the spirit community. The community of the spirit is to be left for the spirits while the community of human is to be left for the human. Any crossing of boundaries makes him become a taboo. Man is expected to remain a creation of *Chukwu* in whom he has his origin and sustenance and not expected to join the spirit (*arusi*) commune while he is human. Above all, what his ancestors think about him is vitally important. The welfare of his ancestors depends upon his welfare and vice versa. He is expected to walk by the legacy left behind by his ancestors, i.e.. when they were human. Above all,

an ancestor can only be reverenced by his human children (*diala*) not by any one who has crossed into the spirit realm by adoption by the spirit (deities)

The Osu Institution

As said earlier, the *osu* are people whose forbears were dedicated or given to some deities. The deities accepted them as their property. Consequently though human, they were no longer regarded as mere human by their kit and kin. This is because they had crossed the boundary between the free born into the community of the spirits. They were regarded as taboo once the ritual of initiation into the spirit community had been performed.

Facts about the origin of this practice is lost. However, a number of oral traditions concerning its origin is available. One theory claims that there was a time in the remote past when the local deities became so powerful and dangerous that ordinary sacrifices could not appease them. Human beings were therefore used as sacrifices. The human beings were not killed but were dedicated to the deities alive. Another oral history claims that *osu* started during inter tribal wars. On such occasions villagers usually promised their local deities a gift of human beings if they emerged victorious. War captives were then dedicated to the deities as fulfillment of such promises.

There were occasions when the deities themselves requested particular people to be dedicated to them as their property. This was known through an oracle or a medium. Barren women sometimes promised to dedicate a child to the deity if the deity gave them children. On some other occasions the villagers nominated people whom they gave to the deity in order to avert an impending disaster. In yet other cases people who committed some abominations which deserved death penalty, ran away from their immediate community into the shrine of a deity where they made their permanent abode. In such a case no one dared touch them as they were regarded as the property of the deity from then onwards. There were, however, people who fled into the shrines of the deities for protection. Such an action makes an individual *osu*, the property of the deity. *Nwadiala* (free born) became *osu* if he or she merely sought shelter in the house of an *osu*.[17] Wealth or social status did not immunize such a person from becoming *osu*. An only child who was afraid of being killed by an enemy might become *osu* voluntarily by running to inhabit the shrine of a deity.

Dedication Rite

A person dedicated to a deity becomes *osu* through a final ritual which is carried out by the priest of the shrine

under the watchful eyes of the community elders. On the appropriate market day (*orie)*[18] the person is made to carry the sacred stone slab at the foot of the shrine on his or her head. The chief priest of the shrine would pronounce in the presence of the elders of the community of the village some prayers[19] to which the elders responded `yes' in agreement. The person put down the stone (called *igu*) and sat on it four times. The hair of the person was next shaved completely for the last time in his or her life. The next rite was to cut off part of all of either the left or right ear of the person. The high priest concluded the ritual by greeting the audience. The person having become a cult slave (*ohu Agbara*) was provided a place usually close to the shrine of the deity where he made his home.

Villages and communities have certain deities to which human beings were dedicated. In Umuoye, Imerienive, are the *osu uramurukwa* (i.e. *osu* of the *arusi* of the peoples stream) *osu udele* (i.e. *osu* of the arusi of vulture). *osu Amidioha* (*osu* of the god of thunder). While in *Atta* another Igbo town, we have the *osu Ihueke Atta* (*osu* of the god of yam); *osu Thuogugu* (*osu* of the god of thunder); *osu Iyiala* (*osu* of the god of the land); *osu Iyi mmini mbaa* (i.e. *osu* of the deity of waters).[19] Whichever deity they may belong to, they are derogatorily referred to as *osu*

Arusi or *osu Agbara* collectively (*Agbara* is another word for spirit.

The Significance of the Ritual

There was a three-stage-process involved in the initiation of someone into the *osu* caste.

Firstly, was the stage of separation. This occurred when the person went away from the *diala* community to stay in the deity's shrine. The person remained at this stage until the rites were carried out. The time lapse between the separation and the actual rite was the transition phase. The transition phase lasted as long as the consultations with the oracle took place. Once the consultation procedure was completed, the actual incorporation into the community of the spirits began. The transition duration also depended upon the market day on which the rite of incorporation took place. A person could stay as long as three days in the shrine of the deity before the rite was carried out.

The carrying of the stone slab of the shrine was the first service of the *osu* and symbolises voluntary dedication of himself or herself to the service of the deity. While the stone slab was on the head, the priest in the presence of the community elders pronounced the prayer of initiation. The whole community was represented by the presence of the elders. With the *ofo* in

the hand of the priest representing the presence of the ancestors all the members of the community, both living and non living are therefore witnesses to the occasion. Sitting on the stone four times, perhaps, symbolises more than completion. To the Igbo the number three (3) symbolises completeness. Therefore, four (4) would symbolise more than completeness which can be understood to mean "forever." The person being initiated was by so doing saying that he or she was voluntarily giving himself or herself to the deity forever.

The shaving of the hair sealed the solemn passing from the state of dialahood into that of the service of the spirits when the person became a permanent possession and under the power of the deity.

Although it was not said that the hair was sacrificed to the deity, it is very likely that that was what actually took place. The writer thinks so because in initiations into puberty among known peoples the hair of the youth has been known to be sacrificed to the deity. For example, among the ancient Syrians and Bedouins the hair of youth entering into maturity were sacrificed to the goddess of the Hieropolitan sanctuary which belonged to the universal Semitic mother-goddess as her right upon the youth.[20]

The story about the biblical Samson indicates that from remote ancient times the hair of who ever was vowed a perpetual Nazirite (dedicated to the deity) was never cut, the belief was that the over grown hair marked the person out as different from the other people in the community. In fact the Bible states explicitly that the shaving of Samson's hair caused his strength to depart from him completely, which indicates the belief that his strength and vitality dwelled in his hair (Judges 16:19). Thus, the shaving of the hair of a person being imitated into the *osu* was also a removal of the *diala* (profane) hair to give way for the *osu* (sacred) hair to grow out, the bushy sacred hair of the *osu* thus symbolises his distinctiveness within the community as well as the powers of the deity which indwelled him or her.

The cutting of the ear spills some blood. Blood has been known from ancient times to symbolise life. It has also been known from the Hebrew children that the opening or cutting of the ear symbolises perpetual servanthood.[21] Therefore to the Igbo the blood shed in the initiation into *osu* was a sacrifice which redeemed the life of the community from the curse of *osu*. The cutting of the ear symbolises the perpetual servanthood of the *osu* to the deity who from then owed him or her. The cutting of the ear and the blood

spilled during the cutting sealed the covenant between the *osu*, the deity, the ancestors, and the people.

Two theories have been suggested as to why the parties covenanting with one another involves blood and the cutting of flesh.

One is the retributive theory which claims that the cutting of the flesh and the blood symbolises the retribution that will overtake the perjurer of the covenant.[22]

The other theory is the sacramental theory which was propounded by Robertson Smith.[23] Smith claims that the rite was indicative of protective rather than retributive intention. The flesh cut and the blood are thought to present an obstacle to the power of evil on the person.

In the case of the *osu*, the ritual of initiation effects protection of the *osu* by the deity having become a possession of the deity. The rite was also retributive on the people (*diala*) and symbolised the harm that would befall any *diala* who ill treats the *osu*. In this situation, the *osu* became a taboo to the *diala*.

As an adopted child of the deity, the *osu* could therefore eat the food of the deity and take charge of all that belonged to the deity.

The significance of the ritual of initiation into *osu*, therefore, explains

why there is much fear associated with the *osu*.

Privileges of the Osu

The *osu* served the priest of the deity. This service forced the people to give them gifts such as yams, fouls, kolanuts, oil, cocoyams, fish, petter, etc. The care given to them by the people was similar to the biblical saying that he who preached the gospel should live by the gospel. The *osu* regarded whatever the priest left in the shrine after sacrifice as belonging to him. It is only him who could eat with the spirits and he alone has the right to take and eat whatever was offered to the deity. Any non-*osu* who did that automatically became an *osu*.

Apart from eating with the spirits, the *osu* inherited much around the shrine. He alone farmed on the land surrounding the shrine. He alone could enjoy the produce from the fruit trees within the locality of the shrine. The sacred cows, goats, fowls, etc. of the deity, belonged to the *osu*.

The *osu* also enjoyed some immunity within the community. No one dared spill the blood of an *osu*. Anyone who hurt an *osu* to the extent of spilling some blood faced the wrath of the deity. The *osu* was not flogged by anybody. The *osu* often took advantage of this

immunity to become troublesome and unruly in the community in those days when its privileges were enjoyed. Since they were feared because of the taboo associated with them people would naturally keep away from them.

Just as no one dared get angry with a sacred cow or goat, so it was with the *osu*. A sacred cow could enter into any farm or household and eat up food items without being scolded. So also an *osu* could go to the barn of anybody and take as much food as he or she willed and nobody would raise an eyebrow. The only thing to do was to keep such food items away from the *osu* and any sacred animal. In the olden days when they roamed about aimlessly they constituted a menace to the *diala* (free born) who as a result avoided every association with them.

Sexual intercourse between an *osu* man and a *diala* woman automatically made the *diala* (free born) an *osu*. Consequently no marriage between *diala* and *osu* was allowed,a practice still in effect this day.

The *osu* were highly revered people. In fact, up till today, in some parts of Igboland everyone avoids quarreling with the *osu*. No one dares take him to the law court for fear of incurring the wrath of the deity that owns him.

The *osu* was also exempted from communal labour and was not taxed.

Social Stigma Against the Osu

Perhaps, due to the unpleasant experiences the non-*osu* had as they interacted freely with the *osu*, the non-osu had to learn not to associate commonly with the *osu*. The free born did not need to associate with that which is taboo as if it was ordinary. What is profane should be treated as such and what is sacred (taboo) should be treated as sacred. No man would wrestle with the gods and remain normal. This is perhaps, the lesson the Igbo non-*osu* learned from the *osu* institution. Experience is known to be the best teacher. A situation in which the god came to avenge the harm done to its possession will certainly call for caution. Consequently, the *osu* became ostracised by the non-*osu* in various ways. Being avoided by the non-*osu*, the *osu* life became a life of isolation. He had lost the freedom to associate with the free born and stopped mixing socially with the non-*osu* who were in the majority. As a result of this isolation the *osu* began to be attracted to themselves and began to see themselves as members of a stock. They inter married only among themselves. Their offspring were included in the isolation. In fact, the offspring of an *osu* are more avoided than their parents who were once free born. This is because the offspring of an *osu* were

never free born. They were born *osu* and remained *osu* all their life.

The *osu* was not given any village title. He or she was not initiated into any society. He or she was exempted from the traditional rites of passage. The reason is perhaps that since they had rejected the affairs of the community, they should participate in the affairs of the spirits. It is in the light of this principle that they are seen even till this day. And participating in the affairs of the spirit, made people to avoid them.

The *osu* was not to fetch water or bathe in the same stream with the free born. Touching an *osu* was believed to defile the non-*osu* or even kill him. The *osu* must not participate in the Igbo traditional breaking of kola or distributing or sharing palm wine in the midst of the free born at any social gathering which they were permitted to attend. The corpse of an *osu* was not given a traditional burial. It was carried away from the community and thrown away, buried or mangled in an evil forest (*Ajo ohia*). An *osu* does not become an ancestor and if buried in the same way as the free born the *osu* may carry his or her mischief into the spirit world and prevent the *diala* attaining ancestral status. The *osu* does not possess any *ofo* as the *diala* does, therefore the *osu* has no right to a proper funeral ceremony which is

necessary to usher the dead into the ancestral world. In the olden days, the corpse of an *osu* was buried at night. In fact, the *osu* in those days was to leave the house only towards mid day. This is to prevent *diala* meeting an *osu* first thing in the morning. This is because it was believed that meeting an *osu* first in the morning carried along with it bad luck for the rest of that day.

Identifying the Osu

Today it is becoming more and more difficult to identify the *osu* in a city or larger community. Before the modern urban era, it was much easier to identify the *osu*. In those days the *osu* were found near the shrine of the deity that owns them and that section of the town or village ever remained marked out as the commune of the *osu*.

The *osu* could also be identified through the long or unkempt hair which he or she wore. Since the hair must not be cut as a sign of belonging to the gods, the hair soon over grew and remained so. If cut the k was believed to die or the barber himself dies.

It has also been alleged that a characteristic odour wafts wherever an *osu* is. Today, the odour can only be recognized as that of *osu* odour by those people who are used to the odour.

Some *diala* claim that they feel some aura when an *osu* walks past them or when they come across one.

With Christianity and modern innovations the *osu* have hair-cut like the *diala* and their ears are no longer cut. The alleged characteristic odour is being neutralized by the provision of assorted types of perfumes. It, therefore, becomes very difficult to identify an *osu* away from anybody who knows him as one. However, some *diala* still believe that the *osu* aura and aroma are different from that of the *diala*. Some of the *diala* even claim that identifying the *osu* is a mystery. It is certain as they say, that when they meet an *osu* they recognize him or her as such. *Diala* claim to be able to identify the *osu* any place in the world. It is also interesting to note that the Igbo believe that every ethnic group has *osu* whether the caste is institutionalized or not. Even places, that do not have such idea among them, the Igbo believes still has *osu*. And whenever a *diala* sees one he or she "who had good village life" would be able to identify the *osu*. If this is true, then the *osu/diala* issue is indeed a mystery. It would be wrong to dismiss the above assertion as a delusion because spiritual matters often defy human reasoning. Many spiritual issues are better experienced than philosophised. People who dismiss the fact of *osu* need to think again. What is

important is not to dismiss *osu* belief. Rather, the solution to the influence of the system to this day should be sought for.

Christian Influence on Osu Institution

Christianity came into the Igboland in the later part of the nineteenth century. It met the *osu* institution already highly developed and strongly adhered to by the people.

The initial converts to Christianity were the free born since they were those who were first preached to. This is because the free born were the land owners and the rulers. The missionaries got land to build their places of worship from the patronage of the *dialas*.

However, the missionaries' message of commonality or oneness of all, in spite of caste, attracted the *osu* who soon flocked to the churches. Following the influx of the churches by the *osu* the missionaries lost the support of the *diala*. the *diala* started to desert the church when the missionaries refused to expel the *osu* from the churches. The few who remained, avoided the *osu*, refusing to sit on the same pew with them. Some of these later left the church also. Consequently, the *osu* became more in the church membership with very few of the *diala*.[24] The missionaries soon cut the long and bushy hair of the *osu* This stunned the

diala who had thought that cutting the hair of the *osu* would lead to death. This attracted more *osu* into the church. The *diala*, to deter the *osu* from going to church, introduced derogatory statements about "the *osu* going to church" and made mockery of it. But the *osu* continued to adhere to the church. Some of the *diala* began to dissociate themselves from the communion as they feared to drink from the same cup with the *osu*. Later, the *diala* elders of the villages met and decided that they wouldn't sit watching while their land was being polluted by the missionary visitors. So they incited the burning down of churches. This reaction was started when the missionaries began to make *osu* bury the *diala* as well as burying the *diala* and the *osu* on the same piece of land. Because of the strong belief in ancestorship, the natives could not tolerate such an affront on the people's faith in the after life. Even today, many Igbo Christians still believe in their traditional ancestor and the traditional concept of the after life and family (*umunna*).

It was the intervention of the colonial rulers that abated the conflict between the *diala* and the missionaries. With the coming of the colonialists came Western education and mission schools. The *osu* were first to flock the schools. The *diala* rejected western education

because of that. They sent only their 'lazy' children and the *ohu* (family slaves). It was when the *diala* realized the material gain from western education that they developed interest in it. This explains why most of the educated Igbo were initially the *osu*.

The introduction of the judiciary by the colonial rulers further helped to abate some practices of the Igbo society including the *osu* dedication. Quarrels and conflicts were to be settled in the law courts.

The colonial authorities also began to place the *osu* in governmental posts as masters over the *diala*. This was opposed by some *diala* members of the Nigerian House of Assembly. This eventually led to the passing of a law in 1956 abolishing the *osu* institution.[25] Some *diala* members of the House of Assembly strongly opposed this abolition and fought to see it repealed. Those *diala* who were in opposition challenged the *diala* who were in support of it to be first to give their daughters in marriage to the *osu*. Despite opposition, however, the law had been enacted and still stands. All those who were *osu* by the time of the enacting of the law were claimed to be set free and discharged including their children by the law. The Law went on to declare that the *osu* caste system was forever abolished and declared unlawful. The present constitution of

Nigeria makes provision for freedom from discrimination of all sorts.[26]

However, the enacting of law does not mean that the practise was altogether stopped. What has stopped is perhaps, the dedication of new *osu*. The discrimination and fear surrounding *osu* still persists even till today. For example, a one time governor of the Eastern state (Igbo) was denied a title because he was alleged to have an *osu* woman as wife. He was accused of contaminating his *diala* blood with that of the *osu* woman. Moreover the wife was expected to perform certain rites during the installation of the title. To the Igbo it was sacrilegious for an *osu* woman to perform the rite.

In 1983, the former leader of the defunct Biafra, Odumegwu Ojukwu, during one of his electioneering campaigns is alleged to have stated that "an *osu* would not rule Igbo land, there is now a mixture of Igbo species leaders. Every Igbo man knows that some among them have no claim to leadership because their fathers were objects of rituals and do not qualify for public office. I mean the *osu*."[27] This statement from such a public figure goes further to show the extent to which the constitution has failed to effect any changes in the fears and beliefs surrounding the *osu* system. In fact, this tenacious cleavage to the *osu* beliefs is such that even a wealthy *osu* is worth

nothing before a *diala* in Igboland today. Thus did Ezeala ask the question "Can the Igbo man be a Christian, in view of the *osu* caste system?"[28] This question is indeed vital because even the Igbo clergy who preach equality of all human beings, are also under the grip of the fears surrounding the *osu*. One clergyman after giving a powerful talk aimed against the *osu* system was told by one of the men in the audience to set an example by giving one of his daughters in marriage to an *osu*. The clergy (who is a bishop) quickly said he would never do such so long as the Igbo still rejected such a practise. In fact, most Igbo Christians who are *diala* are gripped with the fear of getting into marital relations with the *osu*. Some *osu* do reveal to the *diala* who proposes marriage to them that they are *osu*. This means that even the *osu* of today accept the fact that they are different. Yet any one called *osu* could go to court to seek redress.[29]

Is there no solution to this nagging problem? The writer thinks that there is a way by which the *osu* system can be stopped.

Ending the Osu System

Many people think that the *osu* beliefs can never be rooted out of the Igbo mind. Some think that only a detribalized Nigeria will end the belief. Yet others feel that it will not be long before the *osu* system will be a forgotten issue without, however, saying how this will come to pass.

Most people including the *diala* would prefer that the *osu* system were a forgotten issue. Yet these still adhere to it tenaciously. It is as if the mere talk about how to put an end to the system provokes greater adherence to the beliefs. This is, perhaps, because any mention of *osu* brings to memory the taboos behind it and its associated fears and dangers.

A number of life experiences point to the fact that the *osu* issue is not trivial. For example, it has been observed in Pentecostal and charismatic Christian ministries that an *osu* has greater difficulty remaining a committed Christian than a *diala*. A lot of spiritual battle ensues once an *osu* becomes 'born again.' Worse still if it is the situation when the *osu* is to be delivered from ownership of these spirit forces. There are even cases of the death of some such converts mysteriously. It takes some special personal experience to discern that such a convert was being claimed back by the deity that owns him or her consequently, the spiritual battle. The author wishes to add that through personal experiences in this ministry he agrees with the Igbo belief that the *osu* perhaps exists even among tribes and races who did not have the institution.

An example is his encounter with a co-traveler in the train during one of his evangelistic trips in the Yoruba part of Nigeria. While on the journey he began to preach to one of the men sitting on the same chair with him. The man claimed to have been `born again.' He introduced himself, fully and gave testimony of how he became `born again.' He also told of his Christian life including the persecution he was passing through at that time from his family. One striking revelation was that he said that his family 'like some other families in Yoruba land" was dedicated to a certain deity. According to him it took place long into the ancient past with his fore father. According to him on becoming `born again,' he began to receive series of attacks which manifested in various ways. The cause of the attacks was unveiled to him first, according to him, "by an angel of God" and later by an elder man in his village when he visited the village. In order to overcome the attack, he sought after "fullness of the spirit and deliverance" from his "Christian brethren." He claimed that although, he was victorious the attacks had not completely stopped.

The above information shows that total commitment to Christ helps an *osu* to dissociate himself or herself from the ownership of the deity.

Therefore, the *osu* fear and discrimination can be checked through preaching the truth about Christianity and emphasising the deliverance which the *osu* has in Christ.

On the other hand to eradicate the *osu* system from the Igbo would require dealing with the psychological aspect of the system. The fear surrounding the *osu* is the major problem. Therefore, if this fear can be removed from the minds of the *diala*, the *osu* system will die a natural death. In fact, it will then be a mark of stupidity and cowardice for any *diala* to look at *osu* with dread.

To eradicate the fear, the Igbo priests, elders and traditional rulers will need to come together and institute a reversal ritual which will bring the *osu* back into the *diala* status. This is not an impossible ritual to formulate. So long as such a ritual will be aimed at ensuring cordiality, peace, and harmony within the society, the writer believes that the ancestors will welcome the idea. Moreover, the Igbo society existed as one before the *osu* ritual was started. Yet, as human beings started the *osu* through the use of rites so will it take human act (ritual) to bring an end to it. There has been no new dedications for ages and the old *osu* are no longer carrying out their duties as cult slaves to the deities. It is even becoming more and more difficult to identify an *osu*. The *osu* are not enjoying all the

privileges denied them in the past and have relinquished past privileges of *osu*.

All that remains is the fear surrounding the *osu*. This is what has kept the system thriving.

The fear surrounding *osu* cannot be removed by enacting laws for laws will only trigger greater remembrance of the taboos surrounding the *osu*. Remembering the taboos will provoke fear of the *osu*.

The offspring of the *diala* today only need to hear about a caste called *osu* in their village and the taboos associated with it to be gripped by the same fear of the *osu* which had been in their parents.

To eradicate *osu* in Nigeria, therefore, there is need for a national call of all those Igbos associated with ritual acts to carry out a single ritual which will reverse the effect of the ancient ritual that introduced the *osu*. The society today has gotten too enlightened to still be adhering to such an out-dated belief. When our children and grandchildren are set free from this fear of the *osu*, the *osu* system will be forgotten.

[1] See G. D. Berreman, "Caste" The International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences L. David Sills (ed.) Vols. 1 and 2 Macmillan and Collier Inc. (1968) pp. 333-338.

[2] Ibid., p. 333.

[3] M. Jacques, The Premise of Inequality in Rwanda, Oxford: (n.p.) (1961) pp. 136ff.

[4] In G. D. Berreman, op. cit. p. 333.

[5] Norman Anderson ed. The World's Religions Leicester, InterVarsity Press, (1985) p. 150.

[6] E. I. Metuh Comparative Studies of 'ATR Onitsha: Imico (1987) p. 61.

[7] V. C. Uchendu, The Igbo of Southern Nigeria New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winiston, (1965) p. 11.

[8] Cf. O. U. Kalu (ed) Readings in African Humanities: African Cultural Development, Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension, (1978) p. 37ff.

[9] Cf. E. Ilogu, Christianity and Igbo Culture New York: Nok (1974) p. 37ff.

[10] Cf. F. A. Arinze, Sacrifice in Ibo Religion, Ibadan, Nigeria: Unw. Press (1970) p. 12.

[11] Metuh, Comparative, op. cit., p. 166.

[12] Ibid., p. 61.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Cf. G. T. Basden, Niger Ibos. London: Frank Cass, (1966) p. 36.

[15] Metuh, Comparative, op. cit., p. 165.

[16] Cf. Kalu, Readings, op. cit., p. 37.

[17] Testimony of Mr. I. Njoku 87 years, Oji-ofer Ukwu I of Atta Asukwuanunu Oral interview Stpe. 1991.

[18] The Igbos have four market days: Orie, Afor, Nkwo and Eke by which Igbo calendar is observed. Each Village has an only acceptable day when *osu* is dedicated.

[19] An example of such prayer is: "O god and father, kindly receive with good heart this special gift we offer you in this your holy day. Let trouble and sickness go far away from us, our wives and our children. May this *osu* dedicated to you bear all the bad omen in our place." This he does holding the *ofo* Igbo symbol of truth and morality. Mba Idika, "Osu" in Traditional Religion in West Africa, E. A. Ade Adegbola (ed.) (1983) pp. 23ff.

The osu is described according to the deity to which he belongs. Thus we have *Uramurukwa* (name of the village stream), *Udele* (vulture), *Amadeoha* (deity of thunder), *Ihueke* (yam deity), *Iyiala* (land or stream of the land), etc. All are referred to as *osu Agbara* or *osu Arusi*.

[20]Cf. B. Kahle, <u>Palestine Jahr Buch</u>, 8 (1912) pp. 150-152.

[21]Cf. Idika, Ibid., p. 23. Unlike the Igbos, the ear of the Hebrew slave who preferred to continue servitude in the home of his master to freedom at the sabatical year was to be nailed to the door post as a symbol that he would remain his master's permanent gift.

[22]Theodore H. Caster, <u>Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament</u>. New York: Harper and Row, (1969) p. 143.

[23]Ibid., p. 149 citing R. Smith (1927) p. 481.

[24]This was the case with every village where people were interviewed.

[25]G. Nwaiwu, "Osu caste, now against the Law," <u>African Concord Magazine</u> Vol. 12, No. 108, (30 June 1987) p. 16.

[26]1979 Federal Government of Nigeria constitution section 39, sub section 2, Chapter Iv on Fundamental Right.

[27]<u>Nigerian Statesman</u>, 10 Feb. 1983.

[28]J. O. L. Ezeala, "Can the Igboman be a Christian in view of the Osu caste system?" Orlu (Owerri), B. 1 Nnaji and Sons Press Nigeria Lit., (1991) pp. 21-22. See also K. Anoka, "Osu across beliefs," <u>Outreach</u>, Vol. 3, No. 1. Sunday, 28 July 1991.

[29]To avoid litigation some *diala* use different names to refer to *osu* in public. e.g. the person or people of the left (*onye aka ioa*). A people or person of the spirits, "*onye nde agbara,*" Arab, etc.

Do We Teach the Bible or do We Teach Students?

by James Plueddemann

Both the clear teaching of Scripture and its application to the needs of the person, church and society are necessary. But neither content nor application is sufficient by itself, and one without the other is dangerous. Yet much Bible teaching in the local church and in the seminary is either subject-matter centered or student centered. We must re-examine the necessary interdependence between knowledge and practice.

A False Dichotomy

The tasks of biblical scholarship and biblical teaching are related yet different. The novice Bible professor may be a competent scholar who has mastered ancient languages, developed skills of research and become an expert in a specific technical area of knowledge. But in the classroom the teacher is appalled to discover that students don't know if the book of Hebrews is in the Old or New Testament. Many have never heard of Calvinism or eschatology. The teacher is dismayed by the biblical and theological illiteracy of students and blames local churches for a lack of solid biblical teaching.

Content-centered educators suspect that biblical illiteracy is the result of "watered-down" student-centered education in the local church and argue for rigorous teaching of solid biblical content. They wage passionate battles against student-centered education which emphasizes feelings and felt-needs over the teaching of pure Bible content.

Personal-revelance educators, on the other hand, feel that the mere transmission of Bible content is not enough. They say that students soon forget Bible facts if they don't see their relevance, thus becoming illiterate. From their viewpoint, the blame for biblical illiteracy is the personal

irrelevance of content transmission teaching models.

A Synthesis

Teaching the Bible is not like running a factory with empty-headed students as containers in which to deposit theological pearls of wisdom. But neither is Bible teaching simply a therapeutic exercise. Theology is not merely a tool to help students get in touch with their feelings so that they can become more self-actualized. Bible teaching that is divorced from life leads to dead orthodoxy, while teaching solutions to the problems of life without an understanding of Scripture leads to heresy and dead churches.

Subject-matter educators assume that learning biblical concepts will mysteriously develop spiritual maturity in learners. They assume that if students learn the outline of the book of Romans, the missionary journeys of Paul, the locations of the twelve tribes of Israel, and can refute the JEDP theory, the teaching task of the Bible professor is accomplished. From there it's the job of the Holy Spirit or the job of another academic department to help students put theological facts into practice and promote spiritual growth.

But mere personal-relevance philosophies of education may be even more dangerous than mere

subject-matter philosophies. They rightly react against dead orthodoxy and the teaching of inert biblical facts, but their teaching may become a gimmick for simply helping one feel good about oneself. The original meaning of Scripture is ignored while "what it means to me" is overemphasized.

This, then, is the dilemma between content-centered and student centered philosophies. Do we teach the Bible or do we teach people? Is the aim of education best accomplished through transmission of absolute truth or through facilitating personal growth in students?

The Secular Debate

The debate is not unique to teaching the Bible. Traditional secular educators argue that schools should go "back to the basics" of teaching the academic disciplines and the great ideas of the classics, while progressive educators are committed to the task of helping students prepare for jobs, be good citizens, and become self-actualized human beings.

John Dewey (1902) argues against the dichotomy between the child and the curriculum, between the logical and the psychological, between freedom and discipline.

Whitehead argues against the teaching of "inert ideas" or ideas which

are not connected with other ideas and with life.

> Culture is an activity of thought, and the receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. (Whitehead, 1929, p. 1)

The Danger

The dichotomy between teaching the Bible and teaching students is dangerous. Teaching the Bible for its own sake is idolatry. We study the Bible so we may know God. But we worship God, not the academic discipline of the study of God. On the other hand, teaching students for their own self-actualization makes an idol out of persons, ignores the power of sin, and ignores the absolute standard of God's revealed Truth.

Educators may attempt to solve the dilemma by balancing curriculum requirements between subject-matter courses and personal-relevance courses. Bible departments may try to overcome the tension by having two tracks. The bright students study "hard" theology with Greek and Hebrew, while the more ordinary students follow a "soft" track of applied theology. But such strategies for curriculum balance only promote the worst of both worlds. These attempts at curriculum balance lead either to ivory tower thinkers or unthinking practitioners. Balancing two curriculum extremes seldom leads to real integration.

Another Paradigm Is Needed

Rather than argue between teaching content versus teaching students, and rather than attempting to balance curriculum between the two, another paradigm is needed. This paradigm places subject matter and the experiences of learners in continual interdependent tension. The interdependence between faith and life is not a new idea. Interdependent tension between the Word of God and life experience began with Adam and Eve. Old Testament patriarchs, judges, prophets and poets cried out for Israel to carefully follow all the commands the Lord had given. Each verse of Psalm 119 is an example of the interdependence between the Word and personal experience. Jesus' teaching does the same.

Jesus never taught subject matter which was divorced from life, nor did he teach solutions to practical problems without teaching the Word. Jesus' teaching of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is one of the best examples of the interdependence between content and experience. Jesus began by asking questions about the present experience

of the disciples. He began with their felt-needs, their problem situation. Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in the Scriptures concerning himself. His teaching was not an isolated lecture -- it grew out of the sadness of two people with downcast faces and out of a comprehensive understanding of Scripture. There was tension between the experience of the two disciples and the Scriptures. Jesus helped them to integrate personal tension with the Scriptures. He didn't teach an irrelevant theological concept (by threatening it would be on the final exam). Nor did he have them sit in a circle to learn a meditational therapy for handling grief and for improving their feelings of self-worth. Jesus compelled them to reflect on the tension between the content of the Word and their present need.

Each of Paul's letters demonstrates the interdependence of truth and life. Even Paul's most systematic writings in Romans 1-11 grow out of specific life-related needs of people in the church at Rome.

Barth was impressed with the way in which Calvin related truth to life.

> How energetically Calvin, having first established what stands in the text, sets himself to re-think the whole material and to wrestle with it, til the

walls which separate the sixteenth century from the first become transparent! Paul speaks, and the man of the sixteenth century hears. The conversation between the original record and the reader moves round the subject-matter, until a distinction between yesterday and today becomes impossible. (Barth, 1933, p. 7)

To say the Bible is practical or pragmatic does not mean that there is a one-to-one correlation between each verse of the Scripture and present felt needs. The Bible is practical because it helps us to know God, and knowing God is infinitely practical. But knowing the Bible is not the same as knowing God. We progressively grow in our relationship to God as we explore the tension between our actual experience and the expectations of the Bible -- between the challenge of Scripture and our obedient response.

This does not mean that absolute truth is generated by experience. To say that the Bible is pragmatic does not negate the fact that it is at the same time absolute truth. God tells us that all Scripture is useful. God alone is the author of truth. But until we see him face to face, our understanding of truth is not absolute, and our understanding

of truth is significantly influenced by experience.

The effective teacher is like a person who takes a strong rope, ties one end around the big ideas of Scripture, ties the other end around the major themes of life, and then through the power of the Spirit struggles to pull the two together. The subject-matter educator is busy tying the rope to the Word, while the personal-relevance educator is tying a rope to the felt needs of students. Even if by chance both are using opposite ends of the same rope, there is urgent need for Spirit-filled rope pullers.

Educational Analysis

In order to better understand the paradigm of interdependent tension, the two sides of the dilemma will be analyzed by seeing how each would answer these three questions:
1. What are the assumptions about the nature of the learner?
2. What educational aims should we seek?
3. Which are the best educational methods?

The Content-Centered Educator

The Content-Centered Educator assumes the learner to be ignorant, with limited understanding and knowledge.

Educational aims come from the deficiency between what the learner knows and what the educator thinks the learner should know. The Bible is taught from the perspective of its original meaning and its historical-grammatical interpretation.

Techniques of higher criticism are taught along with book outlines. Preferred educational methods stress means for efficiently imparting knowledge and truth. Creative teaching methods for subject-matter educators may include the use of technology for transmitting information, such as videos, programmed instruction, computers, and overhead projectors. The subject-matter educators may include the use of technology for transmitting information, such as videos, programmed instruction, computers, and overhead projectors. The subject-matter educator assumes that the learner is like raw material for the theological assembly line of knowledge.

Transmission of information through clearly presented lectures and the appropriate use of technology is good and maybe even necessary, but mere transmission of knowledge is not sufficient.

The Student-Centered Educator

The Student-Centered Educator tends to idealize the current state of the learner. The learner is seen not as deficient or immature, but as a person with rich experiences, deep feelings, great dignity and worth. Aims for teaching the Bible emphasize building relationships with God and with others. Goals include emotional health, becoming aware of one's feelings, and self-actualization. Piety, worship, and the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and meditation are included in the curriculum. The Bible is taught not so much from the standpoint of what it said to the Hebrews and Greeks, but what it says to the modern hearer.

Educational methods provide opportunities for social interaction, building interpersonal relationships, stimulating personal reflection, and encouraging a caring community. Group sharing of experiences, journaling of feelings and prayer for the needs of others in the class might be specific methods. The personal-relevance educator assumes the learner is like a wild flower, ready to bloom under the right conditions. But personal relevance without a deep understanding of absolute truth revealed by God is meaningless. The search for

revelance without an understanding of Truth is ultimately irrelevant.

The Pilgrim Educator

The Pilgrim Educator sees the learner neither as an assembly line product nor as a flower, but as a pilgrim. The learner is in process, but the process is only a part of the aim. The personal process has an external goal. The present state of the pilgrim is not seen as a deficit, but neither is it idealized.

The educational goal is to equip the pilgrim with understanding of the Map God has given and in the power of the Spirit to help him or her benefit from the experiences of previous pilgrims, so that the pilgrim may reach the Heavenly City. A related goal is the development of the pilgrim. God is not only interested in the temporal position of the pilgrim, but in his or her character as well. Biblical subject matter is a necessary tool for guiding and developing the pilgrim.

Pilgrim educational methodology seeks to compel critical reflection between personal experience and the Bible. The Bible is taught clearly, but the teaching of content is not the end -- it is a means. The teacher must challenge the student to explore the tension between God's standard and life experiences, and then help the student to pull the two together. This can be done in many ways -- through a

stimulating lecture, through the use of educational technology or through a dialectic discussion method. Many methods and combinations of methods are appropriate. The effective Bible teacher is a good teacher of the subject matter, but also constantly challenges students to wrestle with biblical implications for ethical dilemmas, problems in the church, and personal lifestyle. The effective teacher will constantly hold absolute Scripture in tension with modern world-and-life views.

Dewey (1902) uses the metaphor of maps to teach the mutual interdependence between the logical and the psychological. Maps are useful tools for pilgrims.

Content-centered educators might teach courses in the history of maps, the original languages of maps, theories of interpreting maps, and the higher criticism of maps. But the study of maps must not take the place of the use of maps for an actual journey.

Student-centered educators on the other hand, might encourage each student to design his or her own map from personal experiences. Experiences and maps of previous explorers are usually ignored. Students are encouraged to wander around in the woods of life. The educator isn't overly concerned if students wander into the swamps as long as they build meaningful relationships with others and better understand their own feelings as a result of the experience. There is little sense of history or sense of direction.

Dewey argued that the experience of the learner leads to better understanding of maps: but maps also help the learner to have a richer journey. Maps and experience on the journey are dependent on each other. It is unwise to divorce the study of maps from the experiences of the traveler. And it is useless for a pilgrim to begin a journey with no sense of direction or purpose. Without the Map of God's revelation, we have no knowledge of who we really are, where we are going, or how we get there.

Suggestions for Teaching

Most Bible teachers agree that more can be done to effectively compel critical reflection on the tension between biblical truth and the needs of the person, the church and society.

The Holy Spirit is a powerful supernatural force in helping to tie together absolute standards of the Word with our sinful condition. Yet the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God, through spiritually gifted teachers, and through spiritually sensitive learners. To depend on the Holy Spirit means that spiritually gifted teachers must continue to "fan to flame" of the gifts God has given. Because we are involved

in a supernatural struggle between the forces of good and evil, there can be no specific guaranteed outcomes, no matter how sophisticated our educational paradigms or methodologies. But spiritually gifted teachers must do more to intentionally challenge students to wrestle with truth in light of the problems of life.

No teacher should be satisfied with merely depositing "inert ideas" into the heads of students to be regurgitated on the final exam. We must teach to higher levels of learning. Students must be challenged to think, analyze, and synthesize ideas with issues in life. Examinations should go beyond informational recall and include questions which force students to interpret and use information to demonstrate insight into current issues. Assigned papers and class room lectures should compel students to struggle with major biblical concepts. We must also compel students to use these concepts in grappling with problems in the modern church and society. For example, students can be given assignments to investigate the "folk-theology" of the average lay person and compare that theology with the teachings of historical trends in theology.

Entrance requirements into seminary or graduate school should require students to have previous experience working with people. How are students to integrate theology and life if the only life they have ever known is school, and the only theology they know comes from books? Seminaries worry about low student enrollments and they feel forced to recruit students with only a "raw B.A." Students would not need lengthy experience but should have enough experience to know people and their problems. They could be required to spend a summer as a camp counselor or to be a lay youth worker in a church. A high grade-point average is not a predictor of the ability to integrate theology and life.

Graduation requirements must include more than Bible credits. Every Bible major should take at least one course in education, human development or communication. All master's or doctoral theses should have at least one chapter pointing out the implications of the particular topic for the needs of the church or society today. Academic programs which teach mere theological "maps" with no concern for the "journey" are sub-biblical.

Bible professors must have more than academic credentials -- they must have experience in ministry and demonstrate personal concern for the contemporary theological needs in the church.

Majors in Christian education must be challenged to constantly reflect

theologically on what they are doing. Too often a course in methods of evangelism does not relate to soteriology, and church management courses ignore insights from ecclesiology courses. Too often practical internships in ministry are not debriefed in light of theological understanding.

Conclusion

Radical educators call for a "de-schooling" of theological education, but the proposed pilgrim paradigm is not radical. Biblical knowledge is necessary for pilgrims and must be taught. Most teaching methods will not need to change. Current structures of theological education do not need to be demolished. Some Bible professors are already teaching in such a way as to promote the intentional interdependence of Bible content with the problems of life.

But the paradigm shift could have a dramatic effect. Bible courses too often have a reputation for being exercises in memorizing grocery lists. Students complain that Bible classes are boring, and boredom becomes the powerful hidden but real curriculum. Christian education courses too often have a reputation for being exercises in the techniques of sandbox and flannelgraph use. Education in the church faces the same problems. There is an urgent need

to a quiet revolution -- for a pilgrim paradigm of Bible teaching.

May we communicate the Map of the Word through the power of the Spirit in such a way that students will be challenged and the church will be strengthened in the pilgrimage of eternal significance.

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Note: This article was first presented to Bible and theology professors at the Evangelical Theological Society held at Taylor University in the Spring of 1988. The article appeared originally in The Christian Education Journal and is a chapter in a forthcoming book entitled Toward a Quiet Revolution in Christian Education. It is used here by permission of the author.

Book Reviews

Translation as Mission:
Bible Translation in the Modern
Missionary Movement
by W. A. Smalley
(Mercer Press: Georgia, 1991) pp.
xiv, 287.

No, the Bishop said, there had been no translation department in the Diocese* when he came in to office and he wasn't going to create one. If the young man wanted to translate the Scriptures, he could be released from his Church post and get on with it.

* * *

From that location, right in the interior of Africa, hundreds of kilometers, thousands of kilometers in any direction, other leaders of the African Church hold similar opinions, sometimes voiced, sometimes seen only in their attitudes and plans for ministry.

* * *

`But why did you put him into the translation project?' persisted the project leader.

`To strengthen the work." was the simple reply. Their eyes met and held -- the eyes of the Translation Project Leader and those of the Diocesan* Churchman. The project leader's

showed incredulity -- the Churchman's cool firmness.

The man they were discussing had been in and out of trouble with the church for many years; in and out of church jobs too, as he had created much disharmony and contributed little else in whatever ministry he had been attached to. Even in and out of prison for belligerent behaviour and careless talk. Now, in a task which called for mature Christian character, spiritual insight, and good theological understanding, he was assigned to the Bible translation programme.

[* I have used the word `Diocese' to indicate that the leaders in question were responsible for church administration over a wide area, and not to imply that these incidents are drawn from any single church community.]

* * *

True stories -- yes. Made anonymous for the telling, but true nonetheless. Nor are they unique. Similar tales could be offered from north, south, east and west of this great continent.

But -- no, let's not overdo it. Africa has many fine Christian leaders, many fine translators. However, it *is* true that Bible translation in not a priority for many of the church's leaders. It is often not seen to be the church's ministry -- it

is the local Bible Society's responsibility or the western missionary's.

In spite of the fact that never before in the history of missions has such a stupendous effort been made to provide Scriptures in the vernacular as has been done in Africa, (Cf. D. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, Oxford University Press: Nairobi, 1968:191), that early vision fizzled out. Translation in Africa began as a missionary effort, and has never been truly adopted into the African church's own mission.

Smalley's book *Translation as Mission* therefore addresses a fundamental issue that has been too long neglected. The responsibility for Bible translation rests squarely and firmly on the church in any culture. Translation of the word of God is part of the church's mission to the people under its care. Indeed, as he begins this volume, Smalley is able to claim that

> Nothing has ever been translated as frequently, into as many languages, and over as long a span of time as the Bible, and so close is the identification of Bible with translation that form many people in the world their translated Bible is the Bible. It is God's word in KiKongo or Wuechua or Cantonese. (p. 1).

Smalley has provided us with 13 chapters, each of which deals with one aspect of the translation task.

The complexity of the task (Chapter 1) is followed by a sketch of how the ministry developed through the church era (Chapter 2) and a look at some of the outstanding translators of the last two hundred years and the major institutions serving the church in this ministry today -- the Bible Societies and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Chapters 3 & 4). Nowadays a number of smaller organisations also contribute, including around ten translation agencies in various African nations.

These very readable introductory chapters are followed by discussion of theological assumptions and their relationship to translation (Chapter 5), and on modern understanding of the translation process, or what is often called *dynamic, or functional equivalence* (Chapters 6 & 7). The approach is sometimes maligned by the more conservative theologian, who unfortunately has usually little or no personal experience of translating into an African language. At heart, however, functional equivalence is a serious attempt to give high place to both the message of Scripture and the grammar and idioms of the language into which the translation is being made. The effort goes far beyond a simplistic attempt to match words and grammar, which,

Smalley is well aware, cannot hope to do justice to the message.

Problems of dialect and bilingualism are central to good planning (Chapter 8), while at the other end of the task lie outcomes, and these are no less important to consider: the influence of translation on the (Christian) community (Chapter 9), the seminal impact of translated Scriptures on what is called `indigenous theology' (Chapter 10), the impact of new literature in a previously non-literate community (Chapter 11), and finally the impact of the translated word of God on communities around the world -- and the sad situation of communities without his word (Chapter 12).

The evidence is irresistible: translation is mission, and mission is dangerously incomplete if the translation question is neglected. The final chapter turns from the past to the future, and to the hoped for return of the task from the hands of `missionaries' to the hands of the local church and its translators. For Smalley, the future of Pentecost lies to a significant degree in this task, and with such men and women.

For many years a Bible Society Translation Consultant, Smalley brings a wealth of practical experience plus the insight of missiological perspectives to his writing. He is a good story-teller, and the book is rich in anecdote which

lightens its content in an encouraging, and even exciting way without detracting from discussion of the issues. Smalley's comment on people and agencies pulls no punches, although his criticism is never unjust, and he avoids idolising the `awkwardly obstinate' personalities (or agencies) of which Bible translation history is made up. At the same time, his careful appraisal will hopefully help bring to an end the kind of anecdotes with which we began. If college faculty and students take this book to heart, we may have a new generation of leaders in the African church who *do* see translation as an integral part of the church's mission.

Church history courses rarely have much to say about the place of translated Scripture in the expansion of the church, but as well as history courses, mission, evangelism, and contextualization studies could profitably include one or more chapters of this book as assigned reading.

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Internationalising Missionary Training

William David Taylor, Editor
Exeter:Paternoster Press, 1991
Grand Rapids:Baker Book House, 1991
XIV, 286 pages.

What are the best ways to train missionaries? What are the best ways to train them in the non-Western world? What can Western institutions learn about missionary training by studying the emerging non-Western training models? What can non-Western missionary training institutions learn from each other?

Internationalising Missionary Training probably offers the best resource currently available to answer these important questions. The book itself is "historic" in the words of its editor, Dr. Bill Taylor, Executive Secretary of the WEF Missions Commission. It is a compendium of essays and reports on missionary training in general with an emphasis on non-Western training in particular. The book emerged from a unique consultation on contemporary missionary training held in June 1989 in Metro Manila, Philippines. where 60 missionary leaders from 24 countries met for 4 days in the "Manila Consultation On Two-Thirds World Training" to discuss the burning need for effective missionary training.

During this workshop, the participants evaluated and critiqued eight different missionary training models from Kenya, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Singapore, Korea, USA, and Britain. The reports which were written specifically for the publication of this book, are included in this unique one-volume contemporary resource on missionary training worldwide.

Important issues such as curriculum, training philosophy, culture and learning styles, contextualization, accreditation, training goals, appropriate technology and methods, missiological versus practical emphasis, holistic versus dichotomistic training environment, and many other significant questions are presented and discussed.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, entitled "The Context Of Missionary Training," presents an appropriate perspective on the growing need for effective missionary training. In this section, Larry Pate, author of *From Every People: A Handbook Of Two-Thirds World Missions With Directory/Histories/Analysis* (Marc, 1989), offers a current overview of the phenomenal growth of two-thirds world mission agencies and missionaries over the past 15 years. Pate notes that "the two-thirds world mission movement has grown approximately five times faster

than the Western missions movement during the past 10 years." The implications of this growth for non-Western missionary training provide a fitting backdrop for the reports and essays in the book.

The second section of the book, "Models of Missionary Training," presents 11 different ways in which cross-cultural missionaries are being trained today. Most of these models are creative and innovative from the perspective of traditional Western education.

The third section, "Critical Education Considerations," sets forth six essays which deal with specific issues applicable to cross-cultural missionary training worldwide. Part four, "Conclusions," written by editor Bill Taylor, offers a challenge to interdependent cooperation through building networks among people and agencies involved in missionary training. The book concludes with a useful bibliography on missionary training, along with a series of helpful addresses.

The book is well presented, with an index which permits the reader to find the particular reports and essays in which he is interested. In addition, it is a valuable handbook on current missionary training, with a detailed description of a number of currently

functioning institutions, including important statistics about these schools.

For anyone involved in cross-cultural missionary training and/or new frontiers in theological education generally, this book offers a very current perspective on what is actually taking place around the world. Since two of the school reports in Part Two of the book are from institutions representing what is being done in both East and West Africa (Kenya and Nigeria), the book has particular usefulness to those involved in cross-cultural training programs and Christian education/theological ministries here in Africa.

Since some models of training in the non-Western world presented in the book will be judged highly innovative from a Western perspective, Christian educators in the West will also find a wealth of creative ideas with which to improve, change or renew their own involvement in theological or practical Christian education, beyond just missionary training. For those actually involved in missionary training, this book should be considered an essential resource handbook of ideas, facts, possibilities and expected results.

The library of any missionary training institution should consider this book an essential holding. In addition, it would be a useful addition to the libraries of both Western and

non-Western mission agencies, as well as to the libraries of most theological schools or Christian education ministries, in view of the creative ideas and insights presented in the various training models discussed. These insights could benefit a wide range of Christian education programs.

Wilbur O'Donovan, Jr.,
SIM theological educator

Introduction to Biblical Christianity from an African Perspective
by Wilbur O'Donovan, Jr.,
(Ilorin: Nigerian Evangelical
Fellowship, 1992) [order from: SIM
Literature Dept., P.O. Box 7900,
Charlotte, NC 28241, USA]
389 pages/$5 (Africa), $11
(elsewhere).

O'Donovan states that, whereas there are many books on theology for use in European and North American theological schools, a great need continues to exist in Africa for theology textbooks written in plain English from an African perspective. This need O'Donovan attempts to meet. In this book, intended as a textbook for use in Africa, O'Donovan seeks to express the truths of the Bible in terms of the African situation, and to demonstrate

how to develop a Christian theology from an African perspective.

O'Donovan, who has served for more than 25 years in theological education in Nigeria, begins this book with certain basic questions and answers about worldview in general and about African worldview in particular. Some of the questions are: 1) What is the meaning of world view? 2) Is there really a general African Worldview? 3)How do we build a theology that is Biblical? 4) What problems have been encountered in trying to build a theology which is both Biblical and also African? 5) How can we overcome the problems of the past and build a theology which is truly Biblical and also truly African? These questions form the grid through which O'Donovan constructs an expression of Christian theology that is meant to be both acceptably Biblical and acceptably African.

The book is certainly well organized. Popular theological arguments are clearly presented in simple easy-to-read sentences. The case studies that precede each chapter and the questions that accompany them make the chapter content easy to understand, and provide the context for discussing the theological issues addressed in each chapter. This is not common to any North American or European theological textbook familiar to me.

For theology to be African, O'Donovan argues, it has to reflect certain elements within the African worldview. Such elements include "emphasis on life in community with others of the extended family and clan," "beliefs about relationships to the spirits of the ancestors," "the viewpoint that is taken toward the spirit world," higher regard for life and for the importance of people more than things,""[African] history of colonial rule and the experience of independence," "holistic view of life," "emphasis on events of life more than emphasis on schedules and clocks." O'Donovan implies that it is necessary for the African theologian to be aware of these basic tenets within the African worldview before he can do theology that is African (pp. 3,4).

For theology to be biblical, O'Donovan states that it must express "what the Bible teaches on a particular subject as one encounters that subject in various books of the Bible." To do this he advises that: (1) "We must carefully observe all that the Bible says on that subject in all places it is mentioned in the Bible." (2) We must determine the meaning of all statements concerning that subject. And (3) "We must apply the Bible teaching on the subject to life today."

In his treatment of the Holy Spirit, O'Donovan missed a tremendous opportunity to state the reason why the Holy Spirit is called the *Holy* Spirit. There are other kinds of spirits in African culture. O'Donovan could have contributed to the understanding of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity if he had stated the differences between the Holy Spirit and the spirits in African traditional beliefs. Also, O'Donovan does not clearly distinguish how the Bible is different from the Koran and from African traditional religious beliefs. Study questions which he provides, comparing the Bible with the Koran and with African oral traditions and legends, make for a better understanding of the Bible. However, a vigorous discussion of the differences between the Bible, the Koran, and the oral resources within the African Traditional Religion would have been of major assistance in better understanding the Bible.

I believe that O'Donovan has made an important contribution in the development of textbooks suited specifically for theological education in Africa. What he has begun should be continued as African evangelical scholars take up the task of writing theological textbooks from an African perspective. I recommend O'Donovan's book to every African theological and religious educator, and to Africa's theological schools for library purchase and for classroom use.

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2 Corinthians
Tyndale New Testament
Commentaries
by Colin Kruse
(Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity
Press/Eerdmans, 1987)224 pages;
£4.25/$10.

Since the 1950's, the Tyndale NT
Commentary series has proved a
faithful friend to students and pastors.
The original volume on 2 Corinthians,
written by the late R.V.G. Tasker, was
no exception and can be found in a
great many institutional and personal
libraries. But now a replacement
volume, by Colin Kruse, has been
published. Should you invest in a copy?
Yes, indeed, even if you already own
the earlier volume! At $10, the new
commentary is a bargain. For that price
you receive a commentary that
definitely supersedes the former one.

To begin with, Professor Kruse (of
Ridley College, Australia) has the
advantage of thirty additional years of
scholarship upon which to draw. Thus
his list of frequently cited works has
several commentaries published after
1958, material unavailable to this
predecessor. In all, the author notes

some twenty commentaries (English,
France, Herman) on 2 Corinthians.

A second advantage the author had
was the opportunity to see exactly what
had previously been done within the
limits of the Tyndale format and then
improve upon Tasker's work. For
example, Kruse recognized the need for
an expanded discussion of introductory
matters. In comparison to the 1958
commentary, the new volume devotes
twice as much space to the introduction
and to the commentary on 2 Corinthians
1, thus laying a very solid foundation
right at the beginning.

But it is in virtue of the quality of the
exegesis itself that the new commentary
becomes an investment and not merely a
purchase. The real strength of Kruse's
work is his consistent and obvious
effort to demonstrate the continuity of
Paul's thought showing how one verse
or section leads into another. In other
words, the commentary does an
effective job of making exegetical sense
out of the diverse subjects taken up by
Paul. For example, in introducing
chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians,
Kruse notes that Paul seems (at that
point) to be rejoicing in a good
relationship with the Corinthians
(7:14-16). Thus the apostle felt free to
encourage them to renew their previous
commitment to the collection for the
church in Jerusalem (ch. 8-9). Laudable
also is Kruse's effort to integrate 2

Corinthians 6:14-7:1 into its context, a notoriously difficult task. Having already defended the integrity of ch. 1-9, the author proceeds, cautiously, to suggest possible exegetical links with surrounding material.

The main vehicle for explaining these textual links are the short introductions Kruse gives to each passage. This element, lacking in the Tasker volume, greatly enhances the usefulness of the new commentary, helping the reader follow the logic of Paul's argument more easily. Because of this format, however, Professor Kruse has generally omitted mentioning the connecting links when discussing individual verses. The uninformed reader who picks up the commentary merely to check on one or two verses is likely to miss out on some of the riches hidden in this slight volume.

For a commentary of this size (168 pages of analysis), the discussion of individual verses is ample and will help a student understand how to proceed in analyzing the various elements of a dense verse or passage. Although Tasker had stated many of the same conclusions, the newer volume does a superior job of leading the reader to perceive why the interpretation is considered to be correct.

A good example can be found in the exegetical discussion of 2 Corinthians 5:14 ["For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died"]. Kruse comments on the source of pressure on Paul, viz. the love of Christ. Explaining the possible interpretations for the phrase "of Christ," he ultimately opts for a subjective genitive (Christ loves). Next he explores the implication of Christ's "death for all," noting the possibilities presented by the preposition "for" (*hyper*) but also taking into consideration Pauline theology as a whole. The author then shows how his exegetical decision with respect to this particular expression (*hyper*="instead of") provides a logical link with the succeeding phrase, "therefore all died."

Professor Kruse has included, where deemed enlightening, simple but cogent comments on Greek grammar. The depth of the commentary is enhanced as well by several references to other Greek documents, notably the Septuagint and the non-literary papyri. Less frequently mentioned are the Qumran writings and the rabbinic literature. The use of Strack-Billerbeck may, however, raise the question of the chronological appropriateness of these rabbinic citations.

A few other caveats could be mentioned. Perhaps the most conspicuous one for many readers will be the fact that the author regards 2 Corinthians as a somewhat haphazard

scribal joining of disparate portions of two Pauline letters: chapters 1-9 and chapters 10-13. The question of the unity of the epistle has, of course, been debated ever since Semler in the 18th century. The previous Tyndale volume opted for a single letter (largely on the basis of manuscript evidence), whereas Kruse finds himself unable to reconcile the (abrupt) change in tone between chapters 1-9 and 10-13. Readers who would like to compare Kruse's position with other formulations may consult the NT Introductions of Guthrie (1990[4]) and of Carson, Moo, and Morris (1992), the latter presenting a more nuanced position. The practical outcome of Kruse's decision is that he does not attempt to link chapter 10 to what precedes, and possible connections between the two sections are sometimes overlooked. [Yet he does mention finding thematic echoes of 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 throughout the entire canonical epistle--in chapters 4, 6, 7, and 11-12.]

No commentary the size of the Tyndale volumes can be expected to address all the issues of current scholarship. Nevertheless, some reference to the works of Theissen (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*), Meeks (*The First Urban Christians*), Georgi (*The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians*) would surely have strengthened the reader's grasp of the socio-cultural situation of first-century Corinth. Reference to Betz's commentary (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Hermeneia series) is also missing.

A specific point in the text that may be questioned is 2 Corinthians 7:1, where Kruse speaks of sacred prostitution in Corinth. Murphy-O'Connor (*Corinth in the Time of St. Paul*), cited elsewhere by the author, has, however, provided evidence that such a statement could well be anachronistic for the 1st century A.D.

In line with the Tyndale format in general, the focus of the work is on an exegetical understanding of the text itself. Homiletical applications are left to others. [But note p. 181, on 2 Corinthians 10:16.]

The material presentation of the paperback is satisfactory for its price; the book will not fall apart after the first few uses. I noted only one editing error (p. 156, *translations* instead of *translation*). The text used is the Revised Standard Version, occasionally compared with the New International Version.
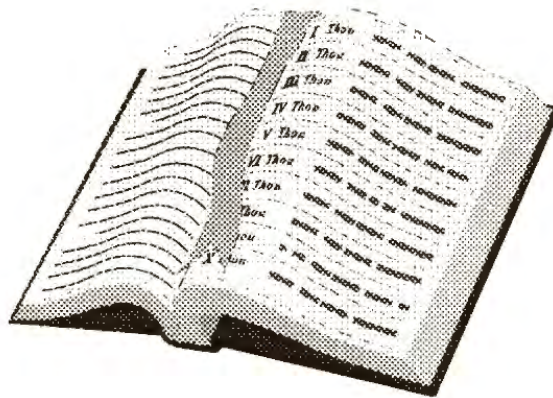
We here in Africa are always in need of good commentaries that are reasonably priced, solidly evangelical, written at a level accessible to our students (Bible college and beyond) and to pastors. InterVarsity Press and Eerdmans have offered us precisely that in this commentary on 2 Corinthians.

The volume is a welcome and
affordable addition to the resources
available to today's Bible student. I
warmly recommend it for every
theological library, whether institutional
or personal.

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Book Reviews