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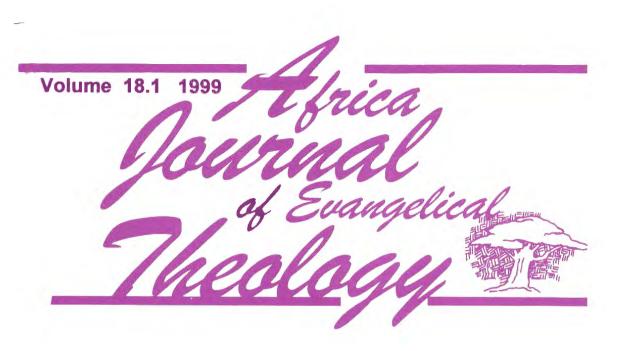 https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology

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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

Purpose: *AJET* is published twice a year by the staff of Scott Theological College, Machakos, Kenya, in order to provide African evangelical theological educators and students with articles and book reviews related to theology and ministry.

Publisher: Scott Theological College, the publisher of *AJET*, has been accredited by ACTEA since 1979 and has been awarded a Charter in November 1997 by the Commission for Higher Education in Kenya to become a private university recognised by the Kenyan government. Scott offers university level theological education with concentrations in Pastoral Studies, Christian Education and Missiology.

Cover: The emblem of Scott Theological College, shown on the cover, features the Mumbu Tree, a historic and cultural landmark on the College grounds. The Mumbu Tree is used by *AJET* as a symbol of the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the Mumbu Tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

AJET is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available on line in the ATLA Religion Database through BRS Information Technologies (Latham NY), and DIALOG *Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). AJET is also indexed in *Christian Periodical Index* and in *New Testament Abstracts* (Cambridge MA).

Viewpoint of Articles: The opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or sponsors.

WHICH WAY ARE WE HEADED?

An AJET Editorial

A pastor was found to have embezzled money from his local church's treasury. The church leadership decided to transfer him to another church as pastor and required him to refund the money as a monthly deduction from his salary. Nothing more was required of him – no public confession to his members nor to the pastors who suffered without three months salary due to his dishonesty. Nor was he required to pay interest on the sum taken. His dishonesty proved to be an interest free loan with no remorse required.

A principal of a Bible School was accused of stealing money and committing immorality. But the governing board of the Bible School brushed it aside and delayed any action on the matter until the working staff placed increased pressure on the governing board. Instead of the fear of God in church leaders, it was the pressure from others that led to discipline.

One pastor was greatly blessed by God in his local church. Through his ministry there was revival with many lay leaders confessing their sins before the congregation. Hundreds of people attended the prayer fellowships each week. Through jealousy the church leadership charged that he was turning the local church into another denomination. The church leadership wasted no time in charging him with theological aberrations, though none really existed. He was forthwith removed from the ministry.

A pastor went overseas for study without permission from the church leadership. When he returned he was not only banned from preaching for six months but treated as a heathen.

Another pastor wrote an article in a magazine in which he questioned the church policy of refusing to baptise a man converted in the state of polygamy. Instead of meeting with the pastor to express their concern, the church leaders simply dismissed him from being pastor without informing the church or discussing the issue with the pastor.

One Bible School administrator was known for his immorality, doctrinal heresies and dishonesty. His reputation was widespread throughout the community but the governing board did nothing about it. When the higher church leadership did further investigation and confronted the governing board

about this problem, they continued to resist removing him from office for six months. He was only *removed after much foot dragging.*

Which way are we headed? Because church discipline is either neglected or improperly exercised, many churches have become a mirror reflection of the values and practices of the world rather than a reflection of the holy God whom we serve. Churches can no longer command respect from the world because so many members are no different from the irreligious outside the church walls.

There are really *only Two Ways* open to the human race: *the Way of Death* and *the Way of Life.* The *Didache* from the second century provided the catechists with the stark contrast of these two ways. The Way that leads to Death, according to the *Didache* includes: "murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false depositions, hypocrisies, a double heart, fraud, arrogance, malice, obstinacy, covetousness, filthy language, envy, audacity, haughtiness, boastfulness..." In contrast the Way of Life is the way of the Spirit of God with holiness and love as hall marks.

Without the proper exercise of discipline, the *Way of Death* becomes the characteristic of many church members. But through the proper exercise of church discipline churches may restore and maintain purity of life among the members. According to Hayden, "Church discipline properly includes the whole work of educating, training, admonishing and correcting the members of the church in all things that pertain unto life and godliness; as well as the exclusion of members who are disorderly and refractory." Church discipline involves both discipleship and corrective discipline. Without church discipline no church has a glorious future. This issue of AJET should prod us to think seriously, **which way are we headed** in our churches and in our Bible training institutions?

In this issue AJET publishes the biblical study by Pastor Philip Mutetei on the necessity and grounds for discipline within the church.

When churches have gone far from the Way of Life there is no hope apart from revival, a breakthrough by the Spirit of God to restore the life and character of God within the church members. In this issue AJET provides an article by Scott Harbert on the importance of prayer to prepare the ground for a new work of spiritual awakening.

As the church leadership goes, so go the churches. Therefore, it is most important for church ministers in training to be moulded into men and women of God. Richard Stuebing offers stimulating insight on spiritual formation of students in our Bible training institutions.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE:
THE GREAT OMISSION:

Part One

Philip Mutetei

Discipline in the church is the great omission in most countries today. Leaders fear to discipline because it seems so unloving and may cause divisions within the fellowship. Discipline may lead to the loss of influential and wealthy members. Discipline is feared because the church leaders themselves have skeletons in their closets so they fear to judge others for sins they themselves have committed. There is also great misunderstanding of the meaning, purpose and nature of church discipline. Many see church discipline as condemning and excommunicating rather than lovingly restoring the wayward back into fellowship with believers.

In this article and the subsequent one we publish the careful research of Pastor Philip Mutetei on Church Discipline. In this issue the Necessity and Grounds of Church Discipline will be examined. Part Two will continue the study with the Proper Procedure for Church Discipline.

There are many definitions of Church Discipline but the one by Lawrence Richards in the Expository Dictionary of Bible Words is succinct and meaningful. "Church discipline is the loving action of the Christian community, committed to obedience, intending through the discipline to help the brother or sister turn from sin and find renewed fellowship with God." Church discipline is more than excommunication but involves loving and faithful teaching throughout the Christians' lives so that they are taught to follow the ways of godliness.

Philip Mutetei graduated from Scott Theological College with a Diploma in Theology in 1982. He later earned his B.A., M.A. and M.Div. from Columbia International University.   He is a candidate for the D.Min. from Columbia. Presently Pr. Mutetei serves as Principal of Mulango Bible Institute in Kenya.

As long as the church of Christ remains on the face of the earth, the exercise of biblical discipline remains a necessity of paramount importance. The necessity of church discipline cannot be overstated, because the church cannot be true without it. The importance of discipline as a mark of a true church may be underscored by the fact that Jesus refers to discipline on one of two occasions in which he mentions the church. It was our Lord who anticipated the power and authority of the church to exercise and maintain discipline (Matt 18:1 5-20). Therefore, we can confidently say that the need for church discipline was much anticipated by our Lord. This is because the church is a new community called out of the world to live a separate life unto God.

God is holy and he intended his church to be pure, undefiled in faith and life. The Bible says to "expel the wicked man from among you" (I Cor. 5:13). Jesus designed self-discipline for his followers (Matt 5:22-23; Mark 7:14-23) but when self-discipline fails, then the Christian community is responsible to exercise discipline lovingly.

Therefore, in order to live in a manner worthy of our calling in Christ, we have to live a life guarded by the biblical principles lest we misuse the liberty/freedom in Christ. Furthermore, ours are the last days (2 Tim 3:1-6) and even as our Lord said (Matt 24:10-12), the hearts of many are turning away from God and so need to be called back to God's ways. This requires times of discipline for those among us who are straying from the ways of God.

The writer is much impressed by what the President of Columbia International University, Dr. Johnny Miller, said in response to the question on the necessity of church discipline in the twentieth century:

> Yes, church discipline is necessary, first of all because it is biblical. It works for the correction and restoration of the errant individual, and it strengthens the testimony of holiness for the church .... This age is certainly not any less sinful than the New Testament era, and it may not be any more sinful.[1]

Discipline in the church is so essential that Ben Patterson has chosen to call it the *backbone* of the church. Without discipline in the church, the church remains distorted in nature because a true biblical church is always perfected through the execution of discipline for its members who go astray. And of course "to belong to the Lord," as Patterson has said, "is to belong to his church and to

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[1] President Johnny Miller of Columbia International University, interview by writer, April 27, 1994, Columbia, South Carolina.

submit to the discipline of his church."[2] In his analogy of the backbone in reference to discipline in the church, Patterson went on to say that: "A spineless body has trouble standing up for anything."[3] This is true of the church – the church that lacks discipline can be trusted to stand for nothing divine, so discipline in the church is essential for her very existence.

Another comment on the necessity of discipline in the church comes from Dr. Titus Kivunzi, the Bishop of the Africa Inland Church (AIC), Kenya:

> The health of the church depends on discipline. Therefore, AIC Kenya needs it. Discipline is a positive term whose purpose is to mature believers, and no church is without such a need for maturity. Furthermore, it is commanded that we administer discipline.[4]

A similar response was also given by David Mbuvi, the former Administrative Secretary of AIC Kenya, who said: "Yes, church discipline is very necessary in Africa mainly because the rate of church growth (numerical) threatens the same church if discipline is lacking and the management will be chaotic.[5]

The author agrees with Neil Lines that discipline in the church must be religiously observed and practised to insure her spiritual health. Lines was quick to cite Marlin Jeschke who said:

> To abandon discipline because it has sometimes been ill-administered is as unwarranted as it would be to abandon worship on the grounds that it has sometimes been ill-conducted. The relaxation of discipline has often more absurd results than ever attended its excess.[6]

Necessity for the discipline in the church of Christ is of all ages. Church discipline is not a denominational agenda. It is not for a certain group of Christians. Rather it is the requirement of God for the whole church, the true church of Christ. It is a biblical teaching as Robertson McQuilkin says in *Christianity Today*: "The Bible is very clear in teaching that there should be

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[2] Ben Patterson, "Discipline: Backbone of the Church," *Leadership*, 4 (1983): 11.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Rev. Dr. Titus Kivunzi of the Africa Inland Church, Kenya, interview by writer, January 25, 1994, Kenya, Africa.
[5] Administrative Secretary David Mbuvi of AIC Kenya, interview by writer, January 20, 1994, Kenya, Africa.
[6] Neil M. Lines, "Church Discipline: Ruination or Restoration," (D Min Dissertation, Western Conservataive Baptist Seminary, 1982), 3.

church discipline and the ultimate discipline is breaking of fellowship or separation. Certain people are to be separated from the church."[7]

THE PURPOSES OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

When a church is involved in the discipline of one of its members, it should affirm to itself the purposes of church discipline revealed in the New Testament. God did not leave his people to design the purposes for discipline, rather in his sovereign counsel he has revealed the purposes to the church.

Restoration of the Sinning Believer

The primary purpose of church discipline is restoration, which is winning the brother, helping him, seeking his well-being, reclaiming the fellowship with God and with the brethren. This purpose must always be remembered, lest discipline becomes harsh, cruel, prideful, vengeful, or destructive. This is because God designed discipline as a means of grace, not of destruction. It is to be an evidence of love for each other, not a time to practice hatred and arrogance toward a fellow believer. As McQuilkin says: "Discipline is designed as a means of grace, not destruction; as an evidence of love, not of hate or fear."[8]

To "*restore,*" used in Gal 6:1, means to reinstate the individual to a proper spiritual condition. The word means to "mend that which is torn." It was used in relation to the mending of torn nets or the setting of broken bones. Galatians 6:1 speaks of a brother who has lapsed into sin; those who are spiritual in the Galatian churches are to approach him to restore him through whatever process was necessary. This is a tremendous ministry given to the church by God himself. Regarding the ministry of restoration, Paul George Thyren says: "To restore and forgive a brother is an excellent test of one's spirituality."[9] If what Thyren has said is true then failure to restore the fallen believers speaks very loudly about the spirituality of the twentieth century church.

In his lecture notes, Dr. McQuay says: "Church discipline, therefore, purposes to awaken a brother to his sin and assist him in returning to his former,

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[7] "Robertson McQuilkin, "Whatever Happened to Church Discipline?" *Christianity Today* 8 (1974): 9.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Paul G. Thyren, "The Pauline Doctrine of Church Discipline," (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), 59.

spiritual healthy condition and usefulness in the body of Christ."[10] Paul writes: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." (Gal. 6:1).

Other passages which speak of restoration include Matthew 18:15; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Hebrews 12:10,13; and James 5:20. For the purposes of this study, the normative is Galatians 6 in which the apostle gives counsel as to who should and how to do restoration with every caution.

The Purification of the Church

God is not only concerned about an individual believer getting restored but also about the rest of the church body. Again it also concerns his character. Sin is contrary to the very nature of God and he hates it. It is God's hatred of sin that leads to the second purpose of discipline in the church: the purification of the church. According to 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, putting the sinning one to shame is necessary so that purity in the church may be maintained. This is because sin left alone will permeate the entire church body as a little leaven affects a whole lump of dough. Therefore, godly discipline is necessary to arrest the defiling effect of sin, thereby keeping the Christian community pure. It should be stressed that although we shall never be able to keep the visible church in perfect purity because we are but fallible persons, we must maintain its purity to the full extent of our knowledge and power. Therefore 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 is a perfect description of what the church ought to do with the unrepentant believer. "The congregation is to restrain their association with the sinning brother for the purpose of putting him to shame."[11]

It is a sad step for a congregation to take toward their fellow believer but a necessary step for the good of the individual and the body's purity. In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, it suggests that the purpose for the severity of discipline is to cleanse the church. There are times when the only way to maintain the health of the church is to restrain the persistent sinner from fellowship of the brethren. As Thyren has expressed: "Even at the cost of losing a limb, diseased or dead flesh must be cut from a person's body to keep it from spreading."[12]

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[10] Earl P. McQuay, Lecture notes presented as part of the class "Pastoral Ministry" (MIN 61 10) at Columbia Biblical Seminary and Graduate School Missions, Columbia, South Carolina, Spring 1994, p. 302.

[11] Thyren, 59.

[12] *Ibid.*, 60.

Yes, it is very difficult to administer such discipline in a congregation. But it is this difficulty that lends itself to the purpose of testing the obedience of a local church or individual to the commands of God.   The Scripture that gives evidence of such purpose in discipline is Romans 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; and 1 John 2:19.

The Deterrent of Sin

Another purpose for discipline in the church is to deter others from sin. This means discipline is aimed at warning other believers of the seriousness of sin, reminding the church that sin and righteousness are serious matters. Therefore, by exercising discipline on the unrepentant believer, believers aim at instilling a healthy fear of God in each member.   McQuay has said: "Discipline can be a teaching tool in the church just as it is in the home if used effectively."[13] Scriptures that encourage such to be practised on persistent sinners are Acts 5:11; 1 Timothy 1:19,20; 5:20.

The Testimony to the World

The last and not the least of the purposes for discipline in the church is a matter of giving testimony to the world.   In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says that it is necessary for the world to see our good works and living in sin is not good works.   Peter instructed believers to maintain excellent behaviour among the Gentiles:

> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.   Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us (I Pet. 2:11-12).

Church discipline helps to protect the reputation of Christ and his church before the unsaved world.   The church that refuses to exercise discipline cannot command respect from the world. Therefore, refusing to challenge known sin brings shame to the church and obviously to the name of Christ, the head of the church.   On the other hand, when the world sees a proper response of the church to sin, respect is maintained and the church is cleared of the charge of hypocrisy which always harms the reputation of the church.

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[13] McQuay, 303.

MOTIVATION FOR DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

The primary motivation for discipline is *love for the fallen brother or sister*. It is indeed an act of love, whereby the spiritual believers extend their care and concern toward their fellow believer who has been caught in sin (Gal 6:1). It is a time to be sad about another brother's or sister's situation and not a time to pride ourselves over the one caught in sin or living a sinful life. It is a time to show mercy and not a time to come showing how good and law abiding we are. This latter was what our Lord rebuked in the Pharisees when they brought the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-1 1). They had no mercy on the woman but prided themselves and though adultery is hated by God, Jesus seeing the Pharisees' attitudes did not condemn but forgave her. A forgiving attitude should dominate our exercise of discipline toward the fallen brothers.

Michael Philips says: "The discipline of church members demands as much creativity as the discipline of children if not more."[14] What is our motivation in disciplining our children? The perfect example is God himself in Hebrews 12:6-7. He disciplines his children because he loves them. We cannot do it differently and expect it to accomplish its designed goal. God designed it to be done in love. Good parents discipline their children but always in love and the goal is to produce good character in the child.

In our endeavouring to restore/save the fallen believers, love must be the overriding motive. As Dr. Miller says: [In church discipline there must be] "humility (Gal 6:1) and mercy (Matt 5:7). knowing that but for the grace of God, they would be in the same predicament."[15] Mercy and humility is key to doing biblical discipline. The lack of mercy and love produces harshness or neglect of this important ministry in the church.

Caring enough to confront a fellow brother is the true motivation of discipline in the church. The church lacks in this area for it seems that many believers do not care about the well being of their fellow believers. Others may fear to judge. Such fear is not biblically justified, because though we do not take God's place of judging we are obligated to follow the biblical principles in our walk of life.

When the Bible tells us not to judge, it means that we should not take God's place and condemn other people – a caution that we should not assume the right to condemn others. As Richards says: "The faults of others are to

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[14] Michael E. Phillips, "Creative Church Discipline Leadership," *A Practical Journal of Church Leaders*, VII. 4 (Fall 1986): 50.
[15] Miller, interview, April 27, 1994.

occasion forgiveness, not condemnation."[16] The truth of the matter is that we are all sinners; and no human being is able to judge others without becoming vulnerable to the same judgement.

But this does not mean that we are not to use the capacity God has given to evaluate and make judgements. Richards continued to say: "It does not even mean that 'judging' is wrong in every circumstance."[17] Therefore, it seems important to affirm with Rostock when he says:

> From the fact that God's judgement threatens man it is often deduced that no man has the right to judge another (Matt 7:1 ff; James 4:11; Rom 14:4,10; 1 Cor 4:5). This does not imply flabby indifference to moral condition of others nor blind renunciation of attempts of true and serious appraisal of those with whom we have to live. What is unconditionally demanded is that such evaluations should be subject to certainty that God's judgement falls also on those who judge, so that superiority, harshness and blindness to one's own faults are excluded and readiness to forgive and intercede is safeguarded.[18]

This obviously should make caring believers humble and careful in the ministry of restoration of the fallen believers.

As stated in the author's definition of discipline, relationships with the members of a congregation are so crucial to effective discipline in the church, just as they are crucial within the human family. As Richards has said regarding discipline in the family, the writer believes it is the same principle for the church: "It is important to remember that no discipline can be effective out of the context of loving relationships and that caring enough to let each child know that he or she is truly important."[19]

The Old Testament clearly shows that discipline was exercised in the context of close relationships. God urged Israel to view his own discipline of them in a family framework: "Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son so the Lord your God disciplines you" (Deut. 8:5). The New Testament is not different in its approach to discipline either. After all, the church is the family (community) of God. We belong to God and to one another. God has delegated

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[16] Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 365.

[17] *Ibid.*, 366.

[18] Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 939.

[19] Richards, 229.

the obligation to individuals and the church to restore the fallen believers and it is all based on our relationship with him and our relationships toward each other.

The writer was impressed by Steve Bradley's thoughts on discipline in the church. Bradley says:

> Church discipline has to be based on relationships within the church. The effectiveness of church discipline is in direct proportion to *trust and love* that has been established between the members of the body of Christ. Without this relationship, the person who has sinned will see the approach of another as a judgemental rebuke and not an attempt to restore. Also, without the relationships built on unconditional love, a person will not have the *trust* and *confidence* to approach an erring brother or sister but will rather '*gossip*' about him or her.[20]

Therefore, exercising discipline in the church is very different from adopting the judgemental and condemning attitude against which Scripture speaks. Discipline in the church is based entirely on the love of God toward sinners. This does not imply cheap grace but rather a serious ministry of the church knowing the prize of the soul as well as knowing the holiness of God. So discipline in the church should clearly portray the loving action of the Christian community, committed to obedience, intending through the discipline to help the brother or sister turn from sin and find renewed fellowship with the Lord.

The overall motivation for church discipline is love for the fallen sister or brother in Christ whom we want to see restored back to fellowship with God and the church. As Neil Lines has said:

> The successful outcome is not only dependent upon the right kind of action being taken, but upon the right kind of attitudes exemplified by disciplinarians as well as the disciplined. Attitudes can either make church discipline work or break its redemptive power. Attitudes can create or destroy people.[21]

With this good intention, discipline was given to the church by Christ himself and we should use every necessary means to help restore the many believers living in sin. It is proper to judge the actions of others for we do have the Scripture as guidelines in our hands. Jesus said to do it in Matthew 18:15-20. The apostles did it and so did the early church. In fact, it is total

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[20] Steve Bradley, "Thoughts on Church Discipline," interview by writer, February 20, 1994, *Columbia Bible College, Columbia, South Carolina.*
[21] Lines, 2.

disobedience to our Lord to let fellow believers live in sin while we can save them. Some of the Scripture giving authority to evaluate the actions of the fellow believers include 1 Cor 2:15; 5:12-13; 6:2-5; 10:15; 11:13, and 11:31-32. In fact, in this last passage, Paul says that God disciplines us because we have not evaluated our own actions, recognised them as sin and confessed them. This means God is not interested in judging if we have already searched and confessed our sins. But failure to do so then awaits God's judgement.

QUALIFICATIONS OF THOSE WHO CARRY OUT DISCIPLINE

In Galatians 5:16 we read: "So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The word, "live by," is in present tense, meaning "go on living" by the Spirit. This is a call to all believers to make their abode in the Spirit habitual and it is those who make their abode in the Spirit that Paul later calls spiritual and calls them to the ministry restoring the one caught in sin (Gal 6:1). Living by the prompting and power of the Spirit of God will make us sensitive to sin in our lives and lives of other members of the church, and the same spirit will give wisdom in handling sensitive situations. If we live by the Spirit we will bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), but if we fail to live by the Spirit we will follow the flesh and no discernment at all. In fact, in Galatians 5:26 Paul warns against becoming conceited, provoking, and envying each other which is the manifestation of the deeds of the flesh in the Christian church. Such Christians as described in verse 26 cannot succeed in exercising discipline on others for they need it themselves.

Earlier our Lord himself challenged the would-be judges of others to watch their lives first:

> Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye (Matt. 7:3-5).

Therefore, initially all true believers qualify to engage in the process of restoration of their fellow believers, provided that they are sure that they themselves are not living in sin. Miller says:

> Church discipline should be seen in one way as the end of the process. The process begins on an individual level when one caring Christian

confronts another Christian with what seems to be sin (Matt 18:15; Gal 6:1).[22]

When discipline is looked upon as a process, it leaves room for all caring believers to help in the process. Sometimes individuals could rescue their brothers without even engaging the whole church. As Dr. Miller said: "Any mature, spiritual, caring, consistent believer is qualified to initiate the process, but only the church or its leaders are qualified to complete the process.[23]

Another response on who would qualify to carry out discipline was given by Kivunzi: "Discipline should be executed only by those in good standing."[24] I understood Kivunzi's meaning of the term "good standing" in relation to God and the church because he went on to say that "those who live (are living) in sin do not qualify to exercise discipline because they themselves deserve discipline."[25] Therefore, we can conclude that the main qualification required in carrying out discipline is purity of life for those doing it. This does not mean they are perfect but it means they should be pure from any known sin and that they be filled with the spirit and so able to extend their hands to restore their fellow brother or sister to fellowship with God and with fellow believers. McQuilkin says:

> Before any thought of discipline, there must be, of course, prayer and self-examination (Gal 6:1; Matt 7:1-5) .... If a person has not given himself to prayer for the brother and if he has not carefully examined his own life he is disqualified because he does not have the love and humility necessary to be God's agent in discipline.[26]

In this whole endeavour we need to be reminded of the wonderful truth, the way of the cross is to exercise discipline faithfully and with love that chooses to act for the welfare of another even at personal sacrifice. For indeed this ministry can be quite risky. But this is the true nature of any ministry of the church. After all, the church was born not without risks, especially as far as our Saviour is concerned, and we cannot do it differently. It should be remembered that restorative church discipline is an expression of divine love.

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[22] Miller, interview, April 27, 1994.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Kivunzi, interview, January 26, 1994.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] McQuilkin, 10.

THE GOAL OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

We are aware that Jesus did not come to the world to condemn sinners but to save them. This is the teaching of the Word of God. If the Lord has saved in the first place to rid the sinner of condemnation, the restoration of fallen sinners is as well a rescue from sin back to fellowship with himself and the church. This then means the goal of church discipline is redemptive.

Lines says: "The biblical goal of church discipline is to win the erring believer to Christ, not to drive him further away. It is designed by the Lord to restore the fallen, not to ruin him."[27]

The church as the bride of Christ exists for the glory of God and sin in its member or members does not bring glory to God which is the ultimate purpose of the church. And so discipline in the church is aimed at restoring the fallen so that sin will have no place in the life of the church and God receives his due honour.

Miller says that the goal of biblical discipline is "to honour God by keeping his bride pure for his glory."[28] If what Miller is saying is the goal of discipline in the church, then every true church should strive to carry it out as needed. The unrepentant sinners must be brought to the understanding that God deserves his glory in his church. And that as long as they persist in sin, the reputation of God is at stake. When the goal of church discipline is understood, then the church will not fail to take the necessary action to the fallen believers. Instead it will be a priority for all Christians to live above reproach for the glory of our Saviour and our God. It is the prayer of this writer for God to help the church today to strive for the things that are noble and honouring to his name.

THE EFFECTS OF DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

When done in the right spirit, discipline in the church will do four important things for the church:

1. It will provide spiritual care for the church member who has fallen, recovering him as well as bearing his burden until he is able to stand again by himself in the power of God (Gal 6:1-3).

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[27] Lines, 2.

[28] Miller, interview, April 27, 1994.

2. It will also bring cleansing and protection from sin to the Christian community. (This means deterring the church from sin.) As David Pietsch has said: "One of the effects of corrective discipline is that it will prevent others from falling into sin. The corrective discipline exercised on an individual becomes preventive for the rest."[29] As taught in 1 Timothy 5:19-20 there are times when public rebuke is necessary in order that the rest also may be fearful of sinning. This tells us that the willingness of the church to take action even against an elder may be the means of keeping other believers from sinning. "By such action, believers are made aware of the seriousness of sin, and the tremendous hatred God has toward sin."[30]

3. It will maintain the power of the Christian community and as such bear witness to the world. This is because the true power of God in the church is experienced when the church is living a pure life before God and the world.

4. Proper biblical discipline will help the church maintain doctrinal purity in the church of Christ and will also help keep away false teachers who go around misleading people with their unfounded teachings. On this, Pietsch has cited McClain who said: "This is a very plain commandment that the Christian is never to surrender, even for the sake of unity, to any man or woman who brings some teachings contrary to the doctrine we have learned in the book."[31]

But if the church will ignore the practice of biblical discipline, then unfortunately the following will become consequences:

1. The reputation of God through his church will be marred.
2. The world will curse the name of God.
3. The church will have no lasting fruit before God. Instead, she will become another human organisation, whereby men will be striving for success in human terms and so then we can talk of a dead church or a church which has left God's purpose and a church without vision or even perhaps a false church.

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[29] David D. Pietsch, "Paul's Concept of Church Disciplines and Restoration," (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975), 16.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*, 17.

THE GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

Whichever way one looks at it, church discipline takes maturity to implement. The goal and the purpose of this practice is crucial; otherwise, a mistaken purpose may accelerate the believer's indiscipline, causing more unnecessary spiritual damage.

It should be clear that the successful outcome of church discipline is not only dependent upon the right kind of action being taken, but upon the right kind of attitudes exemplified by disciplinarians as well as the disciplined. The question of attitudes is crucial, for it can either make church discipline work or break its redemptive power. This means, for the discipline to accomplish its designed purpose, proper attitudes need to be cultivated by both the offended and the offenders. There is a need to understand that both parties belong to the same family, the family of God. It should be clear that the reason for confrontation is the great concern and care for each other as the members of the same family.

The Apostle Paul, in trying to help the church to understand the uniqueness of the Christian relationship toward each other, used several imageries of which this writer prefers to use two. The first is of Christians portrayed as members of the same body in 1 Corinthians 12. In this imagery, Paul says Christians belong to each other and need each other just as the members of the physical body need each other at all times. Even the less significant member matters so much to the whole well-being of the body. Each member functions differently but for the common good of the whole body as designed.

The second image is that of the soldier (2 Tim 2:3-4). Though the true teaching here is on the general Christian life discipline, it also implies that Christians are God's army on earth, called to proclaim the Gospel of the redeeming love of God and also to guard themselves against Satan's endeavours to undo their faith in Christ. This means Christians have a common enemy, Satan, and so they need each other just as much as any good army. This means if any one of them falls in the hands or trap of the enemy, the rest of the members should do all they can to come to the rescue of their fellow brother or sister in the Lord.

This rescue ministry, especially for the fallen believers, is unfortunately not well practised within the church today. Instead, one can almost say Christians have been the only army on the face of the earth that shoots at their own wounded to kill them. This is done in different ways by ignoring the person's sin or overdoing the discipline.

It has been noted that one of the purposes of church discipline is to maintain purity within the local congregation, because sin spreads, affecting the lives of those who come in contact with it. If this is the case, there is a problem. All believers living on the face of this earth are still imperfect and occasionally commit sin. If church discipline is to be carried out against all who sin and against all kinds of sins, then all church members would have to be disciplined. Thus a line has to be drawn somewhere as to what constitutes grounds for discipline and what does not.

There is no doubt that the question of grounds for church discipline is an extremely difficult one, because even though the Scripture has a list of offences warranting discipline, such a listing is not a complete compilation. There is much more to it than is given.

But we can be sure that the illustrations of the offences that are given in Scripture are enough to give us basic principles to guide in this important ministry. In regard to this matter of a list compilation, David Pietsch has cited Marlin Teschke's comment:

> *Numerous writers in the history* of Christianity have attempted to compile a catalogue of sins that offers a reliable guide for initiating church discipline. Some have even sought to establish a graduated scale of sins that rather automatically triggers the appropriate response from the church — perhaps from *mild admonition through public* censure to full excommunication. When a given act is committed, it needs only to be classified in order for church machinery set for proper cycle, to be set in motion. Thus writers speak of sins as grave, flagrant, heinous, notorious, etc., *suggesting a scale of degrees of misconduct.*[32]

Apostle Paul is one who more than all other apostles speaks on this matter of encouraging action to be taken against an erring believer. But he is careful in speaking of disciplining an offending person to regard the attitude of the sinner. For instance, Paul is concerned not so much with the fact that the man has gotten drunk or has committed adultery as he is with the man's response. The key question which needs to be asked is once he/she has committed the sin, does the man/woman acknowledge it as sin? Does he/she repent and refrain from making it a practice of life? While God is clearly interested in every action of a believer, discipline is to be taken against a person who has not only sinned, but who has not repented of his sin. If a man takes sin lightly or continues in it, that is the grounds for church discipline. Pietsch says:

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[32] David D. Pietsch, "Paul's Concept of Church Discipline and Restoration" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975), 24.

"When Paul takes action against a person or commands a church to take action against one of its members, it is because of the attitude of this person as much as it is because of his actions."[33] It should be underscored that the attitude of the offender and his response to warnings are crucial factors in determining the discipline that the church must exercise.

Categories of the Offences Requiring Disciplinary Action

It is vital to keep within the limits of sins clearly indicated in Scripture as those worthy of church discipline, avoiding both legalism and laxity. Sins worthy of church discipline are overt, gross, scandalous, deliberate, and unrepented sins. This includes all manifest transgressions of the Ten Commandments. Thus, disciplinary offences are those that damage the church, weakening its testimony or promoting disunity. Otherwise, the New Testament specifically gives the types of offences calling for corrective discipline. As mentioned earlier, the New Testament does not claim to have given all types of offences needing disciplinary action and so the writer purposes to give a few of these types and not go into great detail but just enough to help with the basic principles in church discipline. The following are classes of sin which warrant discipline.

1 . Heresy. Heresy is departure from a fundamental truth of the faith (such as the deity of Christ or justification by faith). Such a departure from the basic biblical teaching is a serious matter. As McQuay says:

> It is a gross departure from the Christian faith, a deviation from the fundamental blocks of biblical truth that comprise "the faith once for all delivered to saints" (Jude 3). It is error in foundational doctrines that destroys the integrity of the Gospel. Heresy should not be tolerated in the church.[34]

It should, however, be noted that heresy does not involve debates in which earnest Christians differ on questions where Scripture is not clear. Otherwise, taking disciplinary action for a deviation in a doctrine of secondary importance is schismatic and should be avoided as much as possible. Just as Robert L. Saucy has said: "It is obvious from the Scriptural examples that discipline for erroneous teaching concerns fundamental doctrines of the faith

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[33] *Ibid.*, 25.

[34] Earl P. McQuay, Lecture notes presented as part of the class in "Pastoral Ministry" (MIN 61 10) at Columbia Biblical Seminary and Graduate School of Missions, Columbia, South Carolina, 1994, p. 304.

and not lesser differences of interpretation."[35] Otherwise, on non-essentials and sometimes even on interpretation of Scripture, there is room for differences of opinion. And on matters where we are not sure what to say about certain activities by fellow Christians, it is only wise to be more tolerant even as the Apostle Paul admonished the early Christians (Rom 13:19-20,22; 14:I,5). Moreover, discipline is not to be taken on someone who has doubts on some matters of faith. Instead with such we should do as instructed in Jude 22, showing mercy on those who have doubts, and do what we can to clear them from their doubts and save them.

It cannot be overemphasised that the heresy standard has to be more rigid in the case of ministers/pastoral team (pastors and elders) since they are especially responsible for teaching and defending "the counsel of God." They are the ones more responsible to maintaining all the doctrines of Scripture, and are to be disciplined if they fail to do so (1 Tim 3:2,9; Titus 1: 9; James 3: 1). In 1 Tim 3:9. the teaching is that those leading the church must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with clear conscience. Paul made it even clearer in Titus 1:9 that: "the deacon must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." James warns teachers and points to the great accountability that is theirs as leaders and the great judgement awaiting them (James 3:1). In Gal 1:9b, Paul gives one of the severest condemnations of false teachers in all of his writings when he says: "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" Pietsch cites Hendriksen who says:

> Here the storm is, unleashed in all its fury. Paul's "Let him be anathema" is not a mere wish, but an effective invocation. The apostle, as Christ's fully authorised representative is pronouncing the curse upon the Judaizers, who are committing the terrible crime of calling the true gospel false, and of substituting the false and ruinously dangerous gospel for the true and saving one.[36]

In the Pastoral Epistles, the Apostle Paul seriously instructed against false teachers. He never tolerated those people who deliberately taught strange doctrines and the church cannot tolerate them today either. Thus we hear Paul urging Timothy to "instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines" (1 Tim 1:3) and in 4:6-7, he tells Timothy to point out to the brethren the need for rejecting false doctrine and to have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for

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[35] Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God's Program* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 121.
[36] Pietsch, 42.

old women. In both 1 Timothy 6:3-5 and Titus 1:101 6 he gives descriptions of the men who hold to and teach false doctrine. Therefore false teaching is a serious matter and discipline must be carried out on anyone who is warned and refuses to heed the warning and continues to teach strange doctrines. The Lord Himself rebuked the church at Pergamum for not putting away those among them who held false doctrine (Rev 2:14-1 6).

2. Moral delinquency (the scandalous living). The early church practised church discipline on those with moral delinquency, and the present-day church is not excused from this duty. It is important to note that along with the sins of immorality, Paul includes covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, and swindling as sins deserving discipline (1 Cor 5:11). Since Paul lists these other behaviours with immorality, we may argue that more generally other types of moral delinquency should bring discipline. Such things as blatant evil conduct, disorderly conduct, as well as being a busy-body on other people's lives (2 Thess 3:6-1 5) might be included as well.

Church discipline must be carried out upon a church member who is guilty of unrepented sins as those pointed out by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. Here Paul severely condemns the man who was living with his father's wife (incest), perhaps his stepmother. Such misconduct could not be tolerated in the church. This nature of immorality perhaps is not common today, but let the church not be naive to think that it never happens today. But as said earlier, immorality is not the only sin that Paul was condemning because he immediately points to other sins in the same category of moral delinquency. But the case of incest was so obvious that he categorises it first in his list of sins calling for disciplinary action. Though in the beginning of this chapter the writer said that the Scripture does not give us a complete list of sins deserving disciplinary action, one does see in Paul's writings to the churches some very detailed listings of the sins deserving church discipline. Such a listing is especially found in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 and also Galatians 5. In this regard Earl McQuay has said:

> The sins deserving of church discipline may be compiled and defined as follows: 1 Corinthians 5:11 is the list linked with church discipline:
>
> *immoral* - general sexual abuse, including adultery, homosexuality, and prostitution.
> *covetous* - greedy, avaricious for more and more, lust after things, envying person who schemes to get things that belong to others.
> *idolater* - worship of idols.
> *railer* - an abusive, reviling person, who slanders others with hurtful

words.
drunkard - drunken excesses.
swindler - robber, one who "seizes" or "snatches away," extortioner.

I Corinthians 6:9-10 repeats "immoral," "idolater," "covetous," "drunkard," and "railers," and "swindler" and adds the following categories of sins incompatible with the Kingdom of God:

adulterers - unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another.
effeminate - "soft," used of men and boys who allowed themselves to be used as male prostitutes homosexually.
homosexuals - one who lies with a male as with a female.
thieves - robbers.

Galatians 5:19-20 lists "works of the flesh" that Paul declares "shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." He repeats "immorality," "idolatry," and "drunkenness," and adds the following:

uncleanness - moral impurity.
sensuality - lewdness, wantonness, unchastity.
sorcery - witchcraft, magical art.
enmities - personal animosities.
strife - rivalry, discord.
jealousy - envy, to seek or desire eagerly.
outbursts of anger - stirring emotions, then explosions.
disputes - rivalries, party spirit.
dissension - divisions, splits in two.
factions - sects, preferences, strife.
envying - feelings of ill-will.
carousing - revelling, drinking parties.[37]

Such a listing of sins warranting church discipline as given by McQuay shows clearly that biblical Christianity undeniably teaches a high standard of conduct and morality. Therefore, the writer echoes Daniel E. Wray in that: "Those who live in habitual violation of biblical morality and refuse to repent when admonished and rebuked must be removed from church membership (1 Cor. 5)."[38]

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[37] McQuay, 305-306.
[38] Daniel E. Wray, *Biblical Church Discipline* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981), 9.

3. Divisiveness. Divisiveness is the fomenting of strife, the sin of an obstinate and insubordinate person who sets out to divide the church by sowing seeds of dissension and disaffection. It needs to be pointed out that this category of sin cannot easily be distinguished from the doctrinal error category. Several passages of Scripture appear to tie the two clearly together. Such passages include Romans 16:17-18 and Titus 3:10-11. Pietsch says: "False doctrine and divisions and schisms in the church are often related."[39]

As mentioned earlier, the church must not tolerate the causes of divisions among the brethren. McQuay says: "The church is called upon to act against such carnal persons."[40] He quotes from Romans 16:17-18 for this purpose:

> Now I urge you, brethren keep your eye on those who cause dissension and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting (Rom. 16:17,18).

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6-1 3, Paul portrays chronic trouble-makers with a malevolent disposition and factious spirit who "*captivate weak women*" (v. 6), "*oppose the truth*" (v. 8), and "*deceive*" (v. 1 3). John condemns Diotrephes, who loved to be first, rejected the truth, and unjustly accused the apostles "*with wicked words*" (3 John 9-10).

Thus Paul gives strong warnings to: Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned (Titus 3:10-11) McQuay says:

> A self-centred person who constantly brings division and strife to the church must be watched, rebuked (warned twice), and if necessary, removed. He is wilfully rejecting the command to strive for unity, and therefore is self-condemned.[41]

This is to say the church does not condemn these persons. They condemn themselves by their actions and the church affirms their characteristics which are contrary to the biblical teachings.

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[39] Pietsch, 40.
[40] McQuay, 306.
[41] *Ibid.*, 307.

4. Difficulties between the members (relational conflict). It is the desire of God that His children (church) live harmoniously. Jesus said that the world will know that we are Christians by our strong relationships (based on the love) that we all cherish with one another. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34,35). It is not God's desire for church members to live in conflict with one another. Dissension among members and feuding factiously will only cripple the church and lead to schism. It is to be noted that the very first time when Jesus talked about discipline was really concerned about relationships. He took time and detailed how relationships are to be handled between the brethren. In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus presents the three phases for the process of church discipline in the case of a brother who sins against the other. This implies that He strongly desired that they should avoid conflicts with each other. McQuay says:

> Matthew 5:23,24 commands the worshipper to first be *reconciled* to his/her brother before he/she can worship properly. Two persons who attend the same service and partake of the same communion may have enmity in their hearts against each other. This should not be allowed to go on.[42]

It is the responsibility, especially of the spiritual leadership in the local church or Christian organisation, to help resolve *internal* strife between the brethren. But Keith Megilligan was right when he said:

> One of the most perplexing problems facing the church today is the inability or unwillingness of its leaders (and non-leaders) to handle internal strife. Far too many cases of sinful behaviour/conduct go unattended because the spiritual leadership of the local assembly (or Christian organisation) either refuses to deal with the problem or ignores it, hoping that it will go away.[43]

Therefore, unresolved conflicts and broken relationships between members of a church should be dealt with by the church, which Christ, the Head of the church, demands. It is in this context that we find Jesus giving instruction that individuals need to confront each other in order to resolve their conflict (Matt 18:15-20).

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[42] McQuay, 306.

[43] Keith Mcgilligan, "The Ministry of Rebuking: As it Relates to Church Discipline," *Journal of Pastoral Practice* 5 (1981): 22.

The early church knew the importance of this ministry of resolving conflict with one another. Paul calls upon the church at Philippi to help two women in the church who were not living in harmony (Phil 4:2,3). When the people of this world are in conflict with each other they take each other to court whereby their grievances are listened to and judged by the judge. Members of the church should not take each other to court, but rather the church should have spiritual members who are able to guide the two (members in conflict) in arbitration. This is what the Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian Christians and the present-day church is not allowed to do it differently (1 Cor 6:1-8).

Surely if the early church was commanded to build strong relationships and to resolve conflicts among brethren, when the church today fails to help their members who are facing relational conflicts and when they fail to discipline the trouble-making brethren, then they are disobeying God and are guilty.

Extremes in Church Discipline

The following are some of the extremes that have been practised in the name of church discipline.

1. Discipline without instruction. This involves exercising discipline on a person without having taught the person (individual or group) the purpose of discipline, that is, preventative teaching of the Word of God and a clear setting forth of the issue involved. Even if the church had the discipline documented in its church policy (Constitution and Bylaws), it still needs to teach what it is all about and all believers need to be well informed on this important method of helping the church to become like Jesus.

2. Discipline on the basis of rumours. This involves discussing or referring to the person in a negative way before others (or anyone!) that would reflect anything except love and concern for the person. In this regard the writer is referring to the situation whereby the truth is not known but rumours and gossip are entertained and cherished as truth and the person who is the centre of the rumour is victimised without any proof.

3. Discipline as revenge. This involves an attitude of revenge that is reflected by resentment and hostility toward the person who falls into sin. This means we cannot view the situation as if the person has wounded us personally. But many times in dealing with a person who has been caught in a trespass there is a tendency to get into the spirit of revenge and pride upon the fallen person in such a way that he/she will be overwhelmed by our attitude. John MacArthur says:

A pastor once commented, "I have often thought that if I ever fall into a *paraptoma* (trespass), I will pray that I do not fall into the hands of those censorious, critical judges in the church. Let me fall into the hands of barkeepers, street walkers, or dope peddlers, because such church people would tear me apart with their long, wagging, gossipy tongues cutting me to shreds.[44]

As said earlier, the real problem is that when one of their members in the church has sinned, the leaders of the church take it personally instead of seeing the sin as done to God. They look for a way to punish the sinner and not to rescue him/her from the situation; that is very sad. Sin is first of all against God Himself and we need not take it personally because this is not the will of God concerning discipline. As Terry Hulbert says: "He/she has not wounded us but Christ."[45] And so no one should make it personal in any way.

4. Discipline as punishment only. This involves an attitude of punishment to the person caught in sin. This is the spirit of the day. Many wait for their fellow Christians to fall into sin and are ready to pride themselves in punishing the victims.   Hulbert says: "Any discipline should be clearly established as means of restoration and not of retribution."[46]

Therefore, discipline should not be taken as mere punishment by the church leaders. Rather, discipline should be understood as correction or even punishment in one sense but which makes a positive contribution to one's growth in righteousness. This should be the expectation of the disciplinarians. Thus, in one sense, it is okay to think of discipline as punishment but that is not all it is. While punishment is part of discipline, we must remember that discipline is a very positive term. Lawrence O. Richards says:

> Moses said to Israel: "Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son so the Lord your God disciplines you" (Deut 8:5). The New Testament makes the point even more strongly: "The Lord disciplines those he loves and punishes everyone he accepts as son" (Heb 1 2:6). Discipline is an act of love, a parent's gift to a child.[47]

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[44] John MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987). 178-9.

[45] Professor Terry Hulbert of Columbia International University, interview by writer, July 9, 1994, Columbia, South Carolina.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Richards, 172.

If this be the understanding of the discilinarians and education is given to the one being disciplined, then obviously the discipline must be productive leading to growth in righteousness whicch is Gd's desire for church discipline. Of course, these disciplinary experiencees are ainful, but we must endure the pains for they are meant to produce righteousness and peace in our souls. As Richards has said:

> To profit from discipline, we neeed to enure it, neither making light of it nor becoming discouraged of it. VWe areo remain committed to holiness. We are to remain aware of Godb's grac, even when we hurt, so we do not become bitter.[48]

The writer agrees with Richards that

> parents who follow the divinee example will not draw back from disciplining their children. But tthey wil guard against discipline that is an expression of anger rather thnan love and discipline that has no goal other than retribution.[49]

5. Discipline as oppression. COppresson mentality is present in some disciplinarians. Many times, some of theese leaders may feel their positions are threatened by their juniors who are morre capable and of good character. So they look for faults in these juniors in ordeer to destroy their reputation and paint a different picture of the prospective leaders. One can say such leaders suffer from an inferiority complex, but they will not adnit it. They work hard to mar the names of the younger, able men in order · for then to be removed from the church so that these covetous leaders may contilinue in their positions.

6. Discipline by one person. Tfhis is not discipline but a power show in the church and God hates this in his chuurch. The Apostle John tells of this type of power shown by a man named Diottrephes "I wrote unto the church, but Dictrephes. who loves to have the pre-eeminence among them receive not..." (3 John 9-10). Such people still exist withinin the thurch today. The truth is God hates them. They are serving their own pourposes and not God.

7. Discipline for trivialities. Itt is possible that some leaders in the church may pick on the fellow believers ; on small matters and take disciplinary action upon them. Such a mentality is unbiblical, distorted, and unloving. As Wray says, in biblical discipline "people are rct cast out for 'little' sins but for

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[48] *Ibid*

[49] *Ibid*

hardening their hearts to repentance."[50] Otherwise, it is not our job to be looking for sins in other peoples' lives.

8. Discipline in bitterness. This does not accomplish the designed purpose of discipline. Instead, many times such attitudes ruin the wounded person instead of restoring the wounded person (offender). Lines says:

> When a church seeks to right wrong by angrily throwing iniquitous members beneath the millstones of church discipline to grind out their confession, she is maliciously taking matters into her hands and out of the hands of God to whom righting of such wrongs belongs.[51]

In suggesting a better way to administer discipline, Lines went as far as saying:

> It is wrong for a church to vindictively hold anything against a member who has erred. Rather Christ-like attitude compels the church to continue loving the antagonist and to pray for the speedy recovery.[52]

9. Discipline with favouritism. In a different context, James rebuked the Jewish Christians for showing partiality in their treatment of people. Human tendency is to give respect to the good looking, rich, educated adults but despise the poor or young, underprivileged people. In the church of Christ, we are equal and important in the eyes of God and showing partiality in discipline of the Christians is evil and should be avoided. In African culture there is much respect for the wealthy, educated, and elderly, which is good but sometimes goes to an *extreme*. For instance, when these rich, educated people in great positions are caught in sin they are not admonished. They are overlooked while the young, poor, and other underprivileged people are unfairly rebuked and easily excommunicated.

10. Discipline without expectations. Doing discipline without good expectations is useless. Indeed, proper discipline always aims at restoration of the believer. It is useless for any individual or group of people to exercise discipline if they are not expecting the brother or sister to repent from sin. Otherwise, tendencies to want to get rid of the persons without considering their lives at all is unbiblical and sad. There are those who, when they discipline a person even if he repents, still remain distant from him. Discipline in this case

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[50] Wray, 15.

[51] Neil M. Lines. "Church Discipline: Ruination or Restoration," (D.Min. Dissertation, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary. March 1982), 24.

[52] *Ibid.*, 28.

has lost its purpose. Because true discipline in the name of Jesus Christ must include readiness to forgive, it cannot rejoice in punishment which brings sorrow beyond that which produces repentance. Wray says: "Anyone who goes about to practice any of the modes of discipline without earnestly desiring the true repentance and forgiveness of the offender, is attempting to serve God with a false heart."[53]

11. Discipline without prayer. Most of the time there is lack of prayerful attitude as disciplinary action is being taken. This is a great weakness in the church. Taking disciplinary action on the people of God cannot be business as usual. The church should be in prayer as they wrestle with issues which may lead to disciplinary action. Alexander Rattray Hay says: "even when the church decides for failure to repent to excommunicate a person, the church should pray for the excommunicated person."[54] No one should take this ministry lightly.

CONCLUSION

The ministry of restoration of the fallen believer is so crucial today. This is because Jesus did not save for ruination but for fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A proper motivation should be maintained in this whole ministry of restoration. There is no biblical reason for believers to boast when their fellow believer is living in sin. Restoration of the fallen believer is a spiritual endeavour and calls for those who are spiritual (Gal 6:1). We should avoid the lame reasons for not doing restoration and also avoid those extremes. Thus, the church of Christ must cultivate the redemptive view of church discipline today.

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[53] *Ibid.*, 17.

[54] Alexander Rattray Hay, *The New Testament Order of Church and Missionary* (Audubon's New Testament Missionary Union, 1947), 360.

THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF PRAYER IN AWAKENINGS

Scott Harbert

Everywhere we turn these days we hear the heart felt cry for revival. Surely, there are few churches that do not need a new touch from the Lord in awakening them from spiritual sloth and sin. Whenever a church fails to exercise discipline as discussed in the former article, a tremendous need for purging, refining and renewal prevails. Unless God intervenes with spiritual revival, Satan gains more and more control of the church organisation and God receives less and less glory.

In this article Scott Harbert documents the importance of prayer in the whole ministry of spiritual awakenings.   May this article be more than a stimulating presentation.   May it lead to some action in causing our church leaders to fall on their knees in repentance and prayer for a great awakening by the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to investigate the manner in which God has used prayer to bring about spiritual awakenings. My interest in this study has grown out of the past three years that I have been involved with mobilizing the Africa Inland Church (AIC) in Kenya to pray. As a missionary working alongside the Africa Inland Church, I have been involved in promoting the formation of prayer groups with a focus on spiritual awakening.

This paper is structured into three parts.   To provide a general conception of what we mean by awakening, Part I defines what awakening and other like terms are.   Part II examines the role that God plays in spiritual awakening. And Part III describes the role that man plays in awakening, with specific attention to the place and purpose of prayer.

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AWAKENING: WHAT DO WE MEAN?

In a general sense the terms "awakening" and "revival" have similar meanings. Awakening in its most basic sense is simply a religious renewal or revival.[1] Lovelace uses "renewal", "revival", and "awakening" synonymously for broad-scale movements of the Holy Spirit's work in renewing spiritual vitality in the church and in fostering its expansion in mission and evangelism.[2]

Some authors do however make distinction between a revival and a spiritual awakening. Orr sees "Awakenings in the exact sense of the word" as "discoveries of truth" while "Revivals" are "used by the Spirit of God to change the shape of things on earth as well as to win souls to heaven."[3] Shoemaker says the difference between a "mission" and a "revival" is: "a mission produces a few spiritual cut flowers; a revival would strike a root and grow."[4]

Roxburgh reminds us that "renewal" is multi-faceted in its expression.

It encompasses all that God is doing in the world today and we must be careful not to see it in narrow terms of personal blessing or corporate praise. A 'renewing' person or church is one who is open to all that God offers – past, present and future. Renewal brings us to a fresh understanding of the kingdom of God.[5]

Many of the books contrast what revival "is not" with what revival "is". Most of them agreed that revival is not a series of meetings designed to stir up

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[1] Donald T. Kauffman, *The Dictionary of Religious Terms* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1967), S.v. "Awakening."

[2] Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 21-22.

[3] J. Edwin Orr, *The Light of The Nations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 264.

[4] Samuel M. Shoemaker, *By The Power of God* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 121.

[5] Robert L. Roxburgh, *Renewal: Down To Earth* (Great Britain: Kingsway Publications Ltd., 1987), 29.

interest in the church.[6] Revival is not mass evangelism. Roberts pointed out that, "Mass evangelism is work men do for Christ. Revival is work Christ does for man."[7]

Furthermore revival is not some kind of religious emotional extravaganza.[8] I remember witnessing this first hand while staffing one of my first youth camps in the Africa Inland Church in Nyakach, Kenya. The speaker reminded me of a game we used to play as children called "Simon says." Whatever he said or did, we were supposed to say or do. This is not revival.

Even church growth is not what we have in mind when using the term revival. Roberts says:

> Many churches, following carefully laid out biblical principles, are seeing consistent and exciting growth. However, if we make church growth synonymous with revival, we will miss something of the wonder and reality of the greater work God is able to perform.[9]

So, if revival is not a series of church meetings, mass evangelism, religious emotionalism, or even church growth, then what is it? In Scripture, it is always the return of something to its true nature and purpose. Charles G. Finney says:

> [Revival] presupposes that the church is sunk down in a backslidden state, and a revival consists in the return of the church from her backslidings.[10]

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[6] Robert E. Coleman, "Revival: Its causes and conditions," *ACMC Newsletter*, Autumn 1991.

[7] Richard O. Roberts, *Revival* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), 16.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Halifax: Milner and

Revival in a personal sense, according to Finney, simply "consists in obeying God."[11] Revival should be a constant reality for every Christian. Coleman adds:

> The idea that revival is a thing of special times and seasons comes from the inconsistent nature of man, not from the will of God. Unfortunately most of us experience those times of spiritual sluggishness which make revival necessary. But if we lived in the continual fullness of the Spirit of Christ, as God desires, revival would be an abiding state.[12]

Roberts defines revival as "an extraordinary movement of the Holy Spirit producing extraordinary results."[13] He sites three occasions of when God has taken ordinary men and has himself moved in extraordinary ways. Pentecost was one of those occasions. Another was the great sixteenth-century Reformation. And finally the great awakenings in America and Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In defining what revival is we conclude with what Roxburgh has discovered. He says, "Revival is only a part of God's entire work among a people."[14]

> If a church fails to grasp this, it can become introspective and ultimately stagnate in a pool of self-indulgence. Revival rains might stir the pool adding fresh water for a time as in the Welsh Revival of the 1900's, but if the pool is to be clear and fresh we must make a way now for a channel so that when revival comes the pond will flow clean. That channel will be made by earnest, intelligent, prayerful outreach, not by waiting for God to do for us what he has already clearly commissioned us to do

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Sowerby, 1862), 8.

[11] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 1.

[12] Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1989), 21.

[13] Richard O. Roberts, *Revival*, 17.

[14] Robert L. Roxburgh, *Renewal: Down To Earth*, 49.

ourselves – evangelism.[15]

So there is a certain element of mystery about revival. It's a supernatural work of God with men and women coming alive to the life of God.[16] It includes the hard work of implementing dreams through organisations, structures, and strategies through the empowering and enabling of the Holy Spirit. So that leads us to ask the question what is God's part and man's part in revival?

AWAKENING: GOD'S PART

God and Awakenings

God alone sends revival. The Bible shows that God is the initiator. In II Chronicles 7:14 God initiates the effort to see awakening come. "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Whiston has said:

> In praying, as in every religious action, the first and central agent is never man, but always God. Long before we begin to pray at all, God has already been acting in and upon us, preparing the way for our response.[17]

As pointed out earlier, Roberts, in contrasting mass evangelism and revival, stated: "Mass evangelism is work men do for Christ. Revival is work Christ does for man." Arthur Wallis adds:

> There is a wealth of difference between missions or campaigns at their best and genuine revival. In the former man takes the initiative, it may

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[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Robert E. Coleman, "Revival: Its cause and conditions," *ACMC Newsletter*, Autumn 1991.

[17] Charles F. Whiston, *Teach Us To Pray* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1949), 21.

be with the prompting of the Spirit; in the latter the initiative is God's. With the one the organisation is human; with the other it is divine.[18]

Awakening is not the consequence of some committee's planning. And although human factors are involved, in the end the origin of awakening must find its place in the heart of God who loves his people and yearns to bless them.[19]

Revival is the work of God: He is sovereign; He sets the conditions; and it is a work of the Holy Spirit.

Sovereignty of God

God's sovereign work in awakening is based on his perfect character and strengthened by his infallible promises. Coleman states:

> As a display of sovereign grace, [revivals] are entirely supernatural. Yet God does not violate his own integrity in sending them. Revivals must be consistent with God's Word.[20]

God Sets Conditions

When we meet God's conditions we can be confident that revival will come. As Billy Graham put it:

> I believe that we can have revival any time we meet God's conditions. I believe that God is true to His Word and that He will rain righteousness upon us if we meet His conditions.[21]

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[18] Arthur Wallis, *In the Day of Thy Power* (London: Christian Literature Crusade, 1956), 20.

[19] *Ibid.*, 64.

[20] Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites*, 35.

[21] Billy Graham, "We Need Revival," in *Revival In Our Time*, (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1950), 76-77.

Meeting God's conditions means committing ourselves to remove any impediment in our lives that would hinder revival.[22]

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The crucial issue for revival is the dynamic life of the Spirit within it. The Spirit of God is sovereign and moves however and whenever He pleases to convict the lost and restore the backslidden. No means or methods can automatically and simply bring about revival.[23] Revival is about the work of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, it must be always remembered that "times of refreshing...come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19). Revivals are always God given. But while revival remains in God's sovereign control, care must be taken to preserve a proper balance. That God is sovereign in initiation and in the work of awakening does not minimise man's part in awakening. In every awakening there is both a divine side and a human side. In the next section man's place in awakening will be considered.

AWAKENING: MAN'S PART

Man and Awakening

God has a definite purpose for man in salvation, and that is that he might have him as his co-worker.[24] We know that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan are vehemently opposed to one another. Yet Satan cannot, and God will not, control a life without the person's permission. Each person chooses whom he will follow and serve and thus becomes a co-worker with

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[22] Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites*, 36.

[23] Theological Advisory Group, *The Roots of Christianity in Africa* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989),14.

[24] Watchman Nee, *God's Work* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1974), 6.

either Satan or with God in the carrying out of one or the other's purposes.[25]

God has taken his people into partnership with himself, honouring them and binding himself, and made their activity through prayer a measure of the working of his power.   Part of the church's task is to recapture God's lost dominion. Because while the world belongs to God and all the people belong to God, Satan has temporarily usurped what is rightfully God's.   The world is enemy-occupied territory. This calls for warfare.

Man's place in the process of awakening is vital. Hallesby states:

> ...that it is impossible for God to bring the world forward to its goal
> without man. The attitude which man takes is the vital factor in
> determining whether the world shall attain its goal or not. God has
> voluntarily bound Himself to man in His government of the world. From
> the very beginning of the history of revelation we see that God has
> established His kingdom only where He could find men who would
> voluntarily permit themselves to be used by Him. It thus becomes
> evident that God has voluntarily made Himself dependent also upon our
> prayer.[26]

The Place of Prayer in Awakenings

In an age when missionary technology and strategies receive increasing emphasis, and not illegitimately, it is well to remind ourselves of the place of prayer in awakening. S. D. Gordon articulated this well: "The greatest thing any one can do for God and man is to pray. It is not the only thing but it is the chief thing."[27]

Prayer always plays a prominent role in the preparation for and development of revival. In the Bible we have the awakening as told to us in the book of Nehemiah. In this awakening, prayer was involved from the beginning individual prayer of Nehemiah through the months of perseverance.

Other awakenings which took place in the Old Testament involving

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[25] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer* (Chicago: Revell, 1904), 43-46.

[26] O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1931), 156.

[27] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Prayer*, 12.

prayer are: The Mizpah revival of I Samuel 7. It had its beginning earlier in the prayer of Hannah. Or the revival under Asa in II Chronicles 14:1-15:19.

In the New Testament in Acts 1-2 the early church was launched and expanded through the prayers of 120 men and women praying for 10 days in an upper room. As we go through the book of Acts we find that prayer was also a very essential part of the life of the early church. At Caesarea according to Acts 10, the place of prayer in this awakening is seen in Peter and Cornelius. They were both actively involved in prayer during the time before the actual awakening (Acts 6:4; 10:2,9). And later awakenings that occurred in Samaria, at Antioch, and in Ephesus were a result of continuing prayer in the early church (Acts 8:4-24; 11:19-26; 19). Again and again throughout the book of Acts, we read about prayer in the life of the church.

E.M. Bounds writes:

> God's Word is a record of prayer – of praying men and   their achieve-
> ments, of the divine warrant of prayer and of the encouragement given
> to those who pray. No one can read the instances, commands,
> examples, multiform statements which concern themselves with prayer,
> without realizing that the cause of God, and the success of his work in
> this world, is committed to prayer.[28]

Post-Biblical history has also clearly shown what happens when God's people take God seriously in a movement of prayer. Over the past 300 years whenever and wherever God seeks to pour out His Spirit on His people, He begins by stirring up His people to pray.[29] There are the great awakenings of 1790 and 1859 in North America and Europe.[30] Or the East African Revival of

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[28] E. M. Bounds, *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 66.

[29] David Bryant, ed., "Concerts Of Prayer Signal New Hope For The Nations," in *Prayer Pacesetters!* (Minneapolis, MN: Concerts of Prayer International, 1989), 16.

[30] Theological Advisory Group, *The Roots of Christianity in Africa*, 2-8.

1936-37.[31]

God in desiring to bless his people always raises up a few believers to pray for revival. Finney writes:

> I have been amazed to see such accounts as are often published about revivals, as if the revival had come without any cause – nobody knew why or wherefore...Now mark me. Go and inquire among the obscure members of the church, and you will always find that somebody had been praying for a revival.[32]

Still, at this point we would do well to remember that prayer is not the only arsenal of God's weapons in the work of missions. In Ephesians 6:10-20 we are told to "put on the whole armor of God."

John Piper in his article, "Prayer: The Power That Wields The Weapon", cautions us:

> We have to walk carefully, lest we, like others, overstate the case. Prayer is not *the* work of missions. I believe *the* work of missions is the proclamation of the gospel.[33]

However, Piper, throughout his entire article is calling people to unite in prayer: "If God's work depends upon His word, then His word depends upon the prayers of His people."[34]

Prayer does fill the place in awakening as the indispensable means by which man in cooperation with God makes it possible for God's desire for awakening to be fulfilled. Lovelace concludes:

> Manuals on the technology of revival from Finney's *Lectures* on have stressed the connection between corporate prayer and the outpouring of

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[31] *Ibid.*, 9-11.

[32] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 27.

[33] John Piper, "Prayer: The Power That Wields The Weapon," *Mission Frontiers*, June-July 1989, 18.

[34] *Ibid.*, 18.

the Holy Spirit. Ask Evangelicals what the most essential condition of revival is, and they are most likely to point to prayer.[35]

The Purpose of Prayer in Awakenings

Upon examining nearly 300 prayer passages in the Bible, I discovered that the prayers fall roughly under three categories: (1) prayers of adoration, worship, and praise to God; (2) prayers for ourselves, the church, and the people of God; and (3) prayers for the world.

Worship (Celebration). Prayer is intended to be the means by which God is glorified in this world. Worship, as in the combining of hymns, choruses and spiritual songs, along with answers to prayer and prayers of praise, is an important aspect of prayer. E. M. Bounds writes:

> Prayer, praise and thanksgiving all go in company. A close relationship exists between them. The Scriptures join these three together...As prayer brings things to us which beget gratitude and thanksgiving, so praise and gratitude promote prayer, and induce more praying and better praying.[36]

Praying for Spiritual Awakening. "Fullness" is a popular word that describes awakening or revival. David Bryant in defining *fullness praying* explains it this way:

> By fullness, I mean what God does in the church as he wakes us up to the fullness of the person of Jesus Christ and causes the life of Christ to fill his people with his presence and glory.[37]

It seems to me that *fullness praying* is very much a part of what Scripture

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[35] Richard F. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 152-153.

[36] E. M. Bounds, *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer*, 96.

[37] David Bryant, ed., "Concerts of Prayer Signal New Hope For The Nation," in *Prayer Pacesetters!*, 19.

teaches. As we study the prayer of Jesus in John 17, we recognise that God must *first* do a work in us before he can do a work through us. In effect the ones entrusted with the burden for awakening must themselves first be awakened and revived before the work can spread.

Praying for World Evangelization. If we are going to have a biblical prayer life, our praying cannot remain focused inward, however. Revived Christians are not the end result of a revival. We refer back to the prayer of John 17. The prayer of Jesus ends with verse 20 and 21: "...that the world may believe..."

David Bryant calls this fulfillment praying:

> Fulfillment refers not to the fulfillment of our own desires or plans, but rather to the fulfillment of what God has purposed to do by Christ Jesus throughout our society and among the nations.[38]

In the nineteenth century, as a result of a revival movement, missionaries moved out with a more dynamic Gospel and a clearer missionary purpose.[39] Roxburgh concludes in his book, *Renewal: Down to Earth*: "I believe that true renewal must focus more on the harvest than the machinery."[40]

If we are going to have balanced intercession when we pray, then praying for spiritual awakening (fullness) and world evangelization (fulfillment) must be included in prayer for awakening.

So we should look at prayer for awakening from three perspectives, see it in three dimensions: (1) Celebration (Worship); (2) Fullness; and (3) Fulfillment.

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[38] *Ibid.*, 20.

[39] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1964), 247.

[40] Robert L. Roxburgh, *Renewal: Down To Earth*, 246.

CONCLUSION:
A DEMONSTRATION OF AWAKENING

God's purpose in calling some to pray for awakening is not only that God might work in their lives but that He might have channels with which he might richly bless others inside and outside the church. While my purpose in writing this article has been to show the important place of prayer in awakenings, it has been my hope that by showing the importance of prayer in awakenings a growing number of Christians will devote themselves to extra ordinary prayer for renewal among themselves and their churches. Finney states:

> I have not commenced this course of Lectures on Revivals to get up a curious theory of my own on the subject…It is not my design to preach so as to have you able to say at the close, 'We *understand* all about revivals now,' while you do *nothing*…But I wish to ask you a question. What do you hear lectures on revival for? Do you mean that whenever you are convinced what your duty is in promoting a revival, you will go to work and practice it?[41]

Coleman adds: "People respond to a *demonstration* of revival, not an *explanation*. You be that person!"[42]

At the beginning of this paper I noted that I have been a missionary working alongside the Africa Inland Church, involved in promoting the formation of prayer groups with a focus on spiritual awakening. We have already been bringing together church leaders to be trained in prayer renewal. Now the time has come to think about bringing together practitioners – both the opinion leaders and the change agents that really make things happen in the church.

Coleman calls for ones who have the burden for awakening to find a nucleus, develop a group discipline, and minister to others who in turn can mobilize the church. He states:

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[41] Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 16.

[42] Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites*, 69.

> Jesus chose to concentrate his life upon developing character and vision in a relatively small group of disciples...The opportunity for a great national awakening is present, but Jesus individually cannot possibly give to all the people the personal care needed to nurture the fruit of revival. His plan is to raise up men and women who can multiply his ministry, and to imbue them with his love and vision for the world.[43]

We must start reaching into the church to bring together influential men and women who will call others to pray with them for revival.

Shoemaker shares: "Something must happen between you and some of Christ's people. You will need a team of other people with whom to work if you are going to get anywhere."[44] He adds, "Something must happen through you and these people who are associated with you, in the places where you work and to the people with whom you come in contact."[45]

We would like to conclude by proposing an approach to how we and others hope to continue encouraging other African Christians to join together in united, persistent, and extra ordinary prayer specifically for revival in the African church today.

As I listen to church and mission leaders I hear two things. One, we should work from the grassroots level up, concentrating on the local church level. Second, we should work on the national level, working from the top down.

What we all would like to see is for the Africa Inland Church, Kenya (AIC), to work towards prayer and renewal on both the national and local level. My proposal is that rather than working for prayer and renewal from a local *or* national level it could be from a local *and* national level.

Working Down from the Top

The Area Coordinator Training Programme: The aim of this programme would be for a number of Christian leaders to devote themselves to extra ordinary prayer 1) in their own lives; 2) in their own local churches; 3) by leading

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[43] Robert E. Coleman, *The Spark That Ignites*, 56-57.

[44] Samuel M. Shoemaker, *By The Power of God*, 156.

[45] *Ibid.*

or promoting prayer fellowships for pastors and elders in their branches, districts, and regions; and 4) by training other prayer disciples.

The goal of this programme would be to train and disciple thirty (30) area coordinators throughout the AIC in Kenya who would be committed to prayer renewal. The discipling would be done by quarterly prayer conferences in four of the AIC regions. The conferences would be held for one and half days (two nights). The conferences include study, prayer, testimonies, and reports. And in between the conferences the area coordinators would be starting and leading prayer fellowships in their home areas.

Working from the Bottom Up

We could continue where we left off at developing relationships at the local level. Rely on the Spirit of God to revive His people from the grass roots level. i.e. the local church. I could continue to conduct one and two-day workshops on prayer in churches, Bible schools, and colleges. It would be then as these leaders themselves catch a vision for prayer renewal that we could begin to work together to mobilize their churches.

In conclusion we may say that these are some "working ideas". They are working ideas that we pray will provide a basis for further discussion for growth and development in prayer renewal in the A.I.C.

We have had to learn the necessity of first getting the blessing of the top denominational leadership. Without them nothing happens, nothing long-lasting, that is.   So while we have had many dreams, we have had to learn the importance of being patient and sensitive in working with church leadership. It has been more profitable to work through the system, as frustrating as that could be, than to try and go against it. If not, we might have won the battle, but in the end we might lose the war.

At the same time we have also worked hard at developing relationships at the local level. It has been as those leaders themselves have caught a vision for prayer renewal that we could begin to work together to mobilize their churches. Though at times we were tempted to move too quickly – when we did, we paid the price – there is no doubt that the prayer movement is gaining momentum nationwide.

Finally, the members of TAG for prayer renewal are in favour of awakening as their commitment to research, conferences, and action in their own local and district areas of influence have indicated.

We conclude with the words of Marie Monsen, a Norwegian missionary, who learned that it takes many years of sacrifice and preparation before awakening comes.

> It was an indescribable joy to discover these burden-bearers in prayer scattered throughout the whole of China. This was God's plan, the method of His choice. He needed to have all these fellow-workers with Him rightly related to Himself, before He could send, or we receive, the revival that was a work of the Holy Spirit. The period of waiting and praying brought us to the maturity that was necessary before we could receive God's answer to our prayers.[46]

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[46] Marie Monsen, *The Awakening: Revival in China 1927-1937* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), 54.

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SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:
A Survey of the Literature

Richard W. Stuebing

Pastoral training has been increasingly influenced by the world of academia which demands high standards of scholarship in pastoral training institutions. What suffers is the development of pastoral skills and spiritual formation. Without spiritual formation of students all else is in vain. For a brilliant theologian with impressive skills of communication is a disaster without a mature spiritual life.

Richard Stuebing's pioneering D.Min. project assessed programmes for spiritual formation at five selected theological colleges in Africa. The entire study, from which this article is taken, has just been published under the title, **Training for Godliness in African Theological Education**, *and may be ordered at US$5 per copy (surface posting included) from: ACTEA Monographs, PO Box 250100, Ndola, Zambia (make cheques payable to "ACTEA").*

In recent years an extensive ongoing discussion has developed on spiritual formation[1] in theological education. The discussion arises from a widely-shared concern that theological education should focus much more deliberately on aspects of leadership development that transcend mere academic preparation. An overview of the literature on this theme can furnish useful orientation for ongoing attention to this critical need within contemporary

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[1] Generally, the term *spiritual formation* is to be preferred to more general terms such as character development or moral development, which can also be used in a merely secular sense.

theological education.[2]

THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION
IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

What is meant by spiritual formation? A World Council of Churches publication defines spiritual formation as "the intentional processes by which the marks of an authentic Christian spirituality are formed and integrated" (Amirtham and Pryor, n.d., p. 157).[3] Such spirituality must always be both "God-centred and earth-based" (p. 153). This definition is helpful for two reasons. First, it indicates that Christian spirituality involves certain processes (such as whether spiritual formation of theological students should be the responsibility of a specialist or of the teaching staff as a whole). Secondly, it indicates that Christian spirituality that is truly authentic must be integrated into the lives of the students and faculty, and thus be observable, whether that be in the classroom, the dormitory or the church.

Some of the most significant literature in the study of spiritual formation in theological education has been published in Theological Education, the journal of the Association of Theological Schools based in North America (hereafter ATS). The foundational study was completed in 1972 and presented as *Voyage-Vision-Venture: A Report by the Task Force on Spiritual Development.* The opening sentence noted: "For a number of years the Executive Committee of the American Association of Theological Schools have shared with the staff the conviction that a priority issue of major dimensions is that of the spiritual development of persons preparing for ministry." The report continued, "Those sent out to be preachers, teachers and church leaders should not only know about the eternal God but . . . should know firsthand the One to whom the scriptures bear witness" (Babin, 1972, p. 1).

The next major study of spiritual formation emanating from ATS was done by Tilden Edwards in 1979/80 and published in *Theological Education* in 1980 as "Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools". The concerns expressed

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[2] The literature here reviewed is primarily concerned with Protestant sources, since the five institutions under consideration are all evangelical Protestant. Roman Catholicism is rich in literature on spiritual formation, both individual and corporate. For a helpful annotated bibliography of such material, see Amirtham and Pryor, eds. (n.d.), p. 183ff. For a recent evangelical review of spirituality, see Parker (1992).

[3] Although no date of publication is given, references are made in the preface (p. vi) to a 1988 conference and a 1989 publication.

in 1972 were still evident at regional conferences and were summarised by Edwards: "A number of participants note the serious problem of attending spiritual development amidst the great academic pressures put on students by most curricula, which tend to choke out or remove to the periphery serious concern for an integral faith life" (p. 15).

Then a conference on spiritual formation in July 1987 resulted in a number of articles in *Theological Education*, including a special supplementary issue in 1988 that published the conference papers. Forster Freeman (1987, p. 44f) quoted both the 1972 and the 1980 studies in his article entitled, "Spiritual Direction for Seminarians", in which he summarised his Doctor of Ministry studies. In the same supplementary issue, Robert Meye began his conference paper with, "We have long since learned that it is one thing to know the good, and another to perform it. We have that experience in theological education..." (1988, p. 97).

Outside of ATS circles the concern has been the same. Terry Hulbert (1988), of Columbia International University, noted that "in a recent meeting of the deans of thirteen leading evangelical seminaries in the United States, the subject which elicited the greatest concern and lengthiest discussion was the quality of the spiritual life of our students and ways in which we could help them grow" (p. 38).

What should be done? Recognition of the need is not the same as a solution of the problem. Much of the recent literature on the subject of spiritual formation has to do with defining terminology and even discussing the wisdom of trying to solve the problem at all. George Lindbeck (1988) noted that the present generation of theological students does not have the spiritual background of biblical knowledge and prayer that could be assumed in earlier days; today a seminary student's "meditation" might not even be Christian.[4]

Douglas John Hall (1988) agreed that there was a problem, but he doubted that the seminary was capable of solving it. He argued that true spiritual formation is the losing of one's self: Faith should look outward, hope should defy appearances, and love should serve, so it is self-defeating to place the emphasis on personal spiritual development. He summarised his argument as follows: If we belong to a faith-tradition which assumes that spiritual authenticity is a by-product of the loss of self in the contemplation, love and service of 'the other'—and I think that we do!—then it will not remedy the lack of

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[4] Lindbeck thought that even non-Christian meditation had benefits for theological students.

such spirituality to focus everyone's attention all the more on the self and its 'formation' (p. 58).

Throughout his article he showed such a great fear of excessive individualism that any personal relationship with God was in danger of being lost. He preferred using the word discipleship, because of its corporate emphasis, rather than spiritual formation. His definition of God ("that ecological reality behind and in and working through all of life and history") was followed by his concern that "since we humans now have the power to destroy human life on earth completely, what we do can have disastrous consequences for the divine life itself" (1988, p.77). If God's human creation is really capable of destroying God himself, then Hall's pantheistic God bears little resemblance to the omnipotent God of Scripture, the personal God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is therefore not surprising that Hall found difficulty in developing a personal relationship with such a God.

Most writers, however, assumed with Babin (1972) that it is possible to "know firsthand the One to whom the scriptures bear witness" and did not avoid the word, "spiritual," in reaction to the occasional extremes of evangelical individualism. Meye (1988) noted that character and spirituality are virtually synonymous anyway; both can be thought of as what we do and who we are (p. 107). Richard Gross, in one of his final addresses to the faculty before retiring as the president of Gordon College in 1992, took the greatest issue with Hall's approach to the spiritual formation of students when he said:

> We need to be direct, even confrontational, with students regarding their spiritual development. We need to mentor and actively discipline them; we need to exhort them, to challenge them, to encourage and nurture them in an unapologetic way. Students expect that from us. We need to impart to them not just academic knowledge but spiritual wisdom and understanding (1991, p. 11).

The need for spiritual formation in theological education is clearly present, but how to meet that need is still a matter of debate. One factor in the debate is the differing models of theological education that have arisen over the years and their implications for the task of spiritual formation.

MODELS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Jane Smith (1988) expressed the concerns of many theological educators when she wrote, "Certainly a solid and persuasive case can be made for the way in which theology and spirituality became separated in the Christian tradition" (p. 87). James Hopewell (1984) believed that such problems arose

when theology became an "academic analysis of God", rather than a personal knowledge of Him, because theology had to legitimate its university status (p. 62). In his summary of "Spiritual Formation in the Seminary", Carl Lundquist (n. d.) warned that the classical academic tradition, which has become the model for most seminaries, generally ignores the personal life of the student.

Harvey Conn (1980) suggested that there have basically been two models throughout history, the pedagogue and alternate forms. The earlier biblical model of building one another up (Rom. 15:2) through love (1 Cor. 8:1) gave way to schooling and an intellectual defense of the gospel. Despite gains made during the monastic movement and the Reformation, secular values remained a strong influence, and "the teacher-student relationship moved from that of brother to that of father-son, from fraternal to paternalistic. Measurements were taken in terms of cognitive input rather than ministerial gifts" (p. 328).

Robert Ferris (1979) made two categories out of Conn's pedagogue model, both being dependent on the teacher. The first one is the *pastor = knower model,* which claims that "it is the responsibility of the seminary faculty to identify what pastors need to know and to determine how that information can best be organised and communicated. When students are able to demonstrate that they know, they are prepared to enter the ministry" (p. 1). The second is the *pastor = doer model,* which claims that "it is the responsibility of the faculty to identify those skills which are required for effective ministry and to determine how those skills can best be developed by individual students. When students are able to demonstrate proficiency in prescribed skills, they are prepared to enter the ministry." Ferris prefers the *pastor = helper model,* in which he integrates an emphasis on spiritual gifts and "helpfulness" into the training programme itself.

Is spiritual formation automatic? Despite the difficulty in defining spiritual formation in an objective or measurable sense,[5] most writers agreed that ignoring it will not make the problem go away. Babin wrote:

> There is no question of the involvement of the seminary in the process of helping a student to grow in faith and grace. This is the very purpose of its existence. . . . Since the very being a Christian implies becoming a better Christian, the student is involved in a process of growth; and a clear obligation, by the very nature of its stance as theological,

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[5] See Nicholls' comment: "A degree of subjectivity cannot be eliminated in evaluating spiritual development any more than it can be from the system of written examinations" (1995, p. 236).

falls upon the seminary to assist in this process (1972, p.11).

John Ochola's contribution to the debate underlined a similar concern from an African perspective: "Theological education by its very nature must be spiritual, internal, practical and vocational" (1989, p. 19). And Ken Gnanakan (1989), writing from an Asian perspective, added: A renewal in theological education must . . . aim for spiritual standards which may not be accreditable by secular standards. There is an urgent need for theological educators to develop criteria in accreditation that will measure how far theology is having its desired effect on the learner (in Youngblood, p. 49).

Clark Gilpin, in his editorial introduction to the special July 1987 edition of *Theological Education*, insisted that: "Formation will occur, if not by design then by the influence of implicit, unobserved, or unacknowledged norms" (p. 7). Edwards summarised a 1987 paper by Daniel Buechlein that made the same point:

> Spiritual formation cannot be left to chance, any more than the pastoral or strictly academic components of ministerial formation. . . . The role of faculty, staff and students in spiritual formation is inevitable and reciprocal (whether intentional or not). It cannot be merely a task assigned as a separate program to special staff (p. 37).

Edwards' 1979/80 study found greater commitment to spiritual formation in evangelical schools, but there was still some disagreement about its place on campus. "Though an evangelical faculty seems to most consistently value attention to this nurture, some schools view this as the responsibility of the local church and denomination" (1980, p. 24). Thus, in the minds of some evangelical faculty members, the primary concern on campus remains academic and professional, not spiritual. Therefore, the concern to balance academic and spiritual objectives begs an examination of the difference between secular and theological education, another topic that many writers have debated in print.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
SECULAR AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The Dangers of Academia

Babin and his colleagues raised the question in 1972 when they asked if a seminary should be either a professional training school or a graduate school for training in theology. Their conclusion was that it should be neither, because a seminary's primary commitment should be to Christ, not to training or education. It is this commitment that should distinguish a seminary from a

university department of religion (p. 8), but the authors noted that not all students or staff shared this commitment. In light of this concern, it is interesting to note Dan Hoffman's observation that church leaders in Zambia were lukewarm about establishing a department of religion at the University of Zambia, partly because it was felt that "the churches' priority . . . should be pastoral formation rather than classical academic theology" (1982, p. 242).[6]

Lindbeck (1988) spoke for those who are concerned that the spiritual will undermine the academic: "Ours is a society which values academic credentials and respectability. . . . Our seminaries must conform to the general standards of what passes for responsible education or they will lose students and faculty" (p. 25). Freeman, on the other hand, cautioned against Lindbeck's position by quoting W. Robert Martin, Jr.:

> The sad fact [is] that many faculty and some administrators have indeed become preoccupied with looking good in the eyes of the secular academy, and in the process have clearly forgotten why their schools exist and to whom they really belong in the best sense of that word (1987, p. 46).

Ochola's concern was similar to Martin's:

> Theological education must give spiritual connotation to knowledge and its application. The extremes of intellectualism dangerously influencing the development of spiritual life as an ideal must be curbed. Thinking in terms of traditional academic patterns and standards of cognitive knowledge is not enough. Knowledge must be approached in terms of a virile service to God (1989, p. 19).

A. D. Solanky added his support from his Asian experience:

> What we need is not just innovations or better methods but a radical change in our concept of education: learning as experience, versus gathering content, a body of information. We must treat our students as persons, not as boxes to be filled little by little, with little, logically arranged, packets of information. We must expect them to develop abilities, to grow in the experience of the Lord (II Peter 3:18) (1978, p. 133).

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[6] As one who is acquainted with recent discussions between the Theological Association of Zambia and UNZA, I can confirm the continuing accuracy of such sentiments.

The ICETE[7] *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* (1990) also deals with the problem of balancing academic and non-academic concerns in section 7 ("Integrated Programme"):

> Our programmes of theological education must combine spiritual and practical with academic objectives in one holistic integrated educational approach. We are at fault that we so often focus educational requirements so narrowly on cognitive attainments, while we hope for student growth in other dimensions but leave it largely to chance. Our programmes must be designed to attend to the growth and equipping of the whole man of God. This means, firstly, that our educational programmes must deliberately foster the spiritual formation of the student. . . . We must devote as much time and care and structural designing to facilitate this type of growth as we readily and rightly provide for cognitive growth.

Distinctives of Theological Education.

Hulbert outlined five distinctives of theological education, as contrasted with secular education (1988, p. 30f):

1. **Responsibility to God.** We should respond first to the commands of God, not to the marketplace or to the value system of society.

2. **Eternal significance.** "The results of our teaching, whether excellent or mediocre, are permanent."

3. **Absolute truth.** (It is not determined, but discovered). We must "guard against a modern Pharisaism which would emphasise the theological accretions of scholars more than the Word of God itself."

4. **Spiritual dynamic.** This is "not a substitute for diligence but an added factor which affects the reason for and results of learning. . . . Without spiritual formation of the student, theological education differs from secular education mainly in subject matter."

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[7] ICETE (the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education) is a community sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship that links continental associations of evangelical theological schools world-wide. Until 1996 this body was known as ICAA.

5. Centrality of the church. Theological institutions exist in order to serve the churches and must therefore be accountable to them.

Gross outlined his vision of Christian education under seven basic beliefs, which are similar to Hulbert's. Then he continued:

> We may graduate students who are intellectually elite, highly motivated academically, prepared for the best graduate schools and successful once there. But if their hearts are not inclined to God, we have failed to realise our vision (1992, p. 11).

Church-based theological education? One result of the debate over secular education versus theological education is a suggested change of emphasis in the latter. With the fear that theological education is becoming increasingly isolated from local churches, some educators have urged that the local church become the focus of students' training for ministry. Most seminaries include some kind of field-based education that involves spiritual formation, but some writers call for a much greater involvement with the church than the traditional several hours per week.

Jeff Reed (1992) noted that the Pastoral Epistles stress training in the context of ministry, so models for leadership training should be church-based. James Hopewell (1984) offered a detailed argument for such a change when he claimed that the present paradigm which governs the activity of a seminary "centres upon the idea of a student who undergoes cognitive and characterological development deemed advantageous for Christian ministry." That should be replaced by "cognitive and characterological development of the local church" (p. 60). In revising the curriculum, the "primary object of the program would be the development of the congregation, not the student" (p. 63). The advantage of such a programme is that:

> the seminary is not permitted merely to prepare the individual who might later guide the local church in the quest [for a redemptive community], nor is the local church allowed to assign its own responsibility for the quest to a clergyman so prepared (p. 64). The emphasis would be on the seminary and local church working together in the preparation of the Christian minister.[8]

Tim Dearborn's 1994 survey regarding the qualities of a good pastor found major differences among the laity, the pastors and seminary professors.

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[8] Also see Wilson Chow (1995: p. 223ff) for summaries of John Frame's "Proposals for a New Seminary" and what Jonathan Chao calls "shepherd formation."

Church members ranked spirituality as the most important quality and character third; pastors ranked spirituality fourth (character was unranked), and professors ranked character second (spirituality was unranked). Therefore, one must ask whether the priorities of our theological institutions are similar to the priorities of the churches being served.

The Manifesto also noted this concern (Section 2, "Churchward Orientation"):

> Our programmes of theological education must orient themselves persuasively in terms of the Christian community being served. We are at fault when our programmes operate merely in terms of some traditional or personal notion of theological education. At every level of design and operation our programmes must be visibly determined by a close attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the Christian community we serve. To this end we must establish multiple modes of ongoing interaction between programme and church, both at official and at grassroots levels, and regularly adjust and develop the programme in the light of these contacts.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHING STAFF

ATS Standards for Faculty

The accreditation standards of the ATS have clear expectations for faculty members in the area of spiritual formation, and it is helpful to note some of them at this point (cf. Meye, 1988, p. 116f):

> [in addition to] "moral, religious and intellectual depth, excellence in teaching and concern for ministry should characterise the members of the theological faculty."

> "the work load of the faculty members shall permit attention to students." "programs [must] include adequate counselling, personal and spiritual, as well as academic."

> "Members of the faculty shall be ready to minister to the students in their personal/spiritual development."

Meye (1988) went on to list assumptions that he considered to be "more or less explicit" (p. 118) in the current standards. They include "character formation is important for ministry" and "the faculty must be characterised by moral depth and a deep understanding of the heritage of faith giving birth to

schools' commitments." Then under "implicit" standards (p. 118f) he included, "Faculty have a modelling responsibility."

ACTEA Standards for Teaching Staff

The Standards of ACTEA[9] include similar requirements. Thus the "Teaching Staff" section requires lecturers to have "an active participation in the life and worship of the institution, and a visible personal interest in the students and their welfare" (2c, p. 6). The educational plan must embrace a concern "for the students' spiritual and vocational as well as academic development" (4a, p. 7).

Section 6 of the Manifesto ("Community Life") states:

Our programmes of theological education must demonstrate the Christian pattern of community. We are at fault that our programmes so often seem little more than Christian academic factories, efficiently producing graduates. It is biblically incumbent on us that our programmes function as deliberately nurtured Christian educational communities, sustained by those modes of community that are biblically commended and culturally appropriate. To this end it is not merely decorative but biblically essential that the whole educational body—staff and students—not only learns together, but plays and eats and cares and worships and works together.

Therefore the problem is not one of omission in the area of standards. Hulbert's assertion is more likely: "Although spiritual formation is usually included in Christian accreditation standards, it is not always evaluated or emphasised as realistically as other criteria" (1988, p. 39). Alan Chilver's questions (1990) demand answers: "What do students learn spiritually from what we teach? And from how we teach?" (p. 8). One wonders how many faculty members at theological institutions have been reprimanded or dismissed for failing to be involved sufficiently in the spiritual formation of their students!

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[9] ACTEA (the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa) is a ministry of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) that provides networking and support services (including academic accreditation) for theological schools in Africa.

Selection of the Faculty

Having established that accreditation standards underline the critical role that faculty play in the spiritual formation of students, such an emphasis must be seen in the actual hiring practices of theological institutions. Faculty members must meet certain academic qualifications in order for accreditation standards to be met, but this is not to be at the expense of spiritual concerns. Babin summarised his team's findings by noting:

> We have hesitated to mention particular persons who have been successful, or programs of particular institutions we have found valuable, but we can say that the only ingredient we did find in all successes was a dedicated faculty, giving of themselves to help those who would soon be their ministerial colleagues (1972, p. 43).

Spiritual Qualifications of Faculty

Hulbert brought the subject back to the difference between secular and theological education: "The selection of godly faculty and the monitoring of their spiritual development and their impact on students must take precedence over any kind of academic criteria if theological education is to differ from that which is secular" (1988, p. 39). In an interesting affirmation of Hulbert's position, Ferris used Hulbert's own institution (Columbia International University) as one of his case studies and cited it as an example of good objectives in the hiring of faculty:

> It is also clear that careful selection of personnel is the key to preserving institutional values and achieving training objectives. Many administrators have had occasion to regret staffing decisions which focused too narrowly on technical qualifications. . . . the modeling effect of an institution's chief executive officer and faculty shapes the administrative and instructional context which guides the life of the school (1990, p. 77).

One result of Dearborn's study of co-operative, church-based theological education was a prioritised list of ten qualities of a faculty member for a theological institution (1995, p.10). They are: spirituality (passion for Jesus, personal godliness), vision (ability to inspire and instil vision in others), pastoral gifts and ministry experience, communication ability, scholarship (research, analysis, reflection, publication), servant mentality, personal transparency, love for the church, love of culture, love of diversity among people.

Babin's report dealt with this subject in the context of the institution's goals:

> Imagine how the life style of seminaries would be altered if only professors were appointed who possessed spiritual concern if not spiritual charisma, and demonstrated pastoral ability, as well as acknowledged academic competence in their field. By what right is a professor retained on a seminary faculty if he disdains interest in or responsibility for the spiritual growth of students? He may well be a serious impediment to the achievement of the seminary's agreed upon goals (1972, p. 36).

Finally, John Stott underlines the importance of quality leadership in theological institutions (letter to friends, March 1994):

> Thus the seminary is the key institution in the church, and seminary teachers are the key personnel, as they influence for good or ill generation after generation of the church's future clergy. What is needed, then, is a steady stream of new faculty members who combine academic excellence with personal godliness.

Integration of Spiritual Formation

Who is responsible? Whereas Hulbert and Babin believe that all faculty members should have responsibility for the spiritual formation of their students, Freeman's conclusion (1987) was somewhat different. He recommended that seminaries obtain the services of a trained spiritual formation team, although the institution could begin with an individual, even on a part-time basis. Eventually more training could be offered in spiritual development, and faculty members could be encouraged to contribute to the renewal of discipline by their research and publishing (p. 55).

Wilson Chow disagreed with Freeman, who seemed to be willing to leave the spiritual formation of students to specialists in the field. Chow asserted:

> Wholeness and integration ought to be demonstrated by the faculty. This relates to the example of the faculty members individually, as well as the witness of the faculty as a team. Very often the presence of faculty members each with his own specialised field of study only results in polarisation. But the students want to learn from their teachers by way of hearing and seeing (in Bowers, 1982a, p. 56f).

Alan Chilver addressed this concern in the context of his long experience in African theological education, stressing the necessity of presenting "every man mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). His answer to the question, "Can spirituality be taught?" is "Yes! That's what theology is all about" (1990, p.7). Mark Olander, whose Doctor of Education thesis arose from a similar context in Kenya, found that the spiritual competency of theological lecturers was an essential factor in effective classroom teaching (1993, p. 112).

Amirtham and Pryor (n. d., p. 160) also put strong emphasis on the corporate nature of the problem being addressed:

> Spiritual formation is seen as an important task of the whole faculty.
> The atmosphere, relationships, life-styles and courses, all have a
> bearing on it. This calls for an intentional integration, and a common
> understanding of the purpose of theological education among the
> various disciplines and departments. . . . The delegation of spiritual
> formation to just one department does not solve the problem though in
> practical theology or pastoral theology there are special resources and
> sometimes better pre-conditions for promoting spiritual development.

Both Wilson Chow and Bruce Nicholls, in a recent (1995) issue of Evangelical Review of Theology dedicated to the topic of "Excellence in Theological Education", supported integration for similar reasons:

> Integration, furthermore, is not an attempt to maintain a balance
> between the academic, the spiritual, and the practical, as though things
> were done one at a time. Integration means bringing these aspects
> together into a whole, and doing them at the same time (Chow, p. 221).

Spiritual development cannot be merely a subject within theological education, separate from other subjects. Rather it must be a perspective affecting the whole educative process (Nicholls, p. 231).

The Matter of Evaluation

If faculty members who are to be hired must have a commitment to the spiritual development of both themselves and their students, the question of evaluation of faculty (and students) then arises. How should such a commitment be measured? Daniel Aleshire (1985) has written a valuable article on the subject of evaluation, examining reasons for resistance to evaluation, especially from the faculty, and going on to suggest practical ways in which good evaluation procedures can be implemented. Few readers would dispute the

accuracy of his general rule: "Nobody wants to be evaluated, but everybody wants somebody else evaluated" (p. 71).

Reasons for resistance to evaluation. Aleshire stated that the main reason for opposition to evaluation is fear, whatever evaluative techniques are used. People can feel threatened, and personal identities may be at stake, even when good techniques are used ("Bad news from a credible source is much more threatening than bad news from a source easily discredited", 1985, p.72). Therefore the emphasis should be on what he calls *formative evaluation* (which is concerned with development and guidance) rather than *on summative evaluation* (which is concerned with judgement, such as a student's grade being based solely on a final exam). The latter brings confrontation and tension, but formative evaluation "has a way of getting issues into the open, helping persons identify directions, and providing counsel rather than judgement" (p. 73). Benefits of formative evaluation include feedback, guidance (such as becoming a more effective classroom teacher or administrator) and both personal and institutional long-term development (p. 74).

Aleshire also dealt with several possible problems in a forthright manner. In a community where some work better or contribute more in other ways, he wrote: "It is certainly arguable that such distinctions can be made and a community spirit prevail, but many will assume that such distinctions among people will threaten the chances for community" (p. 76). In a theological institution where there is high value placed on academic pursuit and individuality, evaluation may be seen as an attempt to create uniformity at the expense of individual gifts being exercised. Lastly, it is difficult to evaluate different gifts with one method since an effective lecturer may not be as good at writing or at public ministry. He summarised by stating: "Evaluation of people must be sensitive to variables in the institutional setting, and be implemented in ways that insure fairness, consistency of application and disciplined use of resulting information" (p. 90).

A method of evaluation for the faculty. He suggested that a committee of professors, students and administrative personnel be used to evaluate faculty members. Their job would be to suggest strengths, weaknesses and future goals. Then the same committee would interview faculty colleagues, students and members of the administration, for purposes of comparison. The final stage would be the preparation of a written summary, although the faculty member so examined could always request a discussion of the findings.

The Critical Role of the Faculty

Babin's team frequently underlined the essential role played by the faculty. Their first principle is, "The spiritual formation and development of seminary students begins with, and is dependent upon, the spiritual formation and development of the faculty." The report continued:

> If a seminary is to take seriously its obligation to evangelise the students, to witness to the breaking in of the Kingdom, to celebrate the freedom of the Spirit that accompanies obedience to God—if it is to do these things, then it must be the faculty, as men and women in Christ, who do it. It cannot be done by curriculum revision, student evaluations, or reorganisation of the board of trustees—although all of these things play an important role in aiding or hindering the faculty in their job (1972, p. 9).

Later in the report Babin and his colleagues made their point even stronger: "If any one thing has emerged from our study of seminaries, it is the conviction that the spiritual development and formation of students begins with and depends on the spirituality of the faculty" (p. 27).

One of the most helpful sections of the book by Amirtham and Pryor (n. d.) is entitled, "Curriculum for Spiritual Formation" (p. 88ff), which listed a number of questions that are pertinent here. The following questions were under "The Seminary Ethos":

> Do student-faculty relations have the characteristics of "spiritually forming" leaders?

> Do faculty, staff and students volunteer to "bear one another's burdens", or do they only work when paid? Does the seminary seek to be a caring, compassionate community?

> Are members of the community honest, repentant and appropriately humourous about discrepancies in their theological rhetoric and behaviour?

> Are the leaders of the seminary (faculty, administration) the first to practice and model principles of spiritual integrity?

Then the following suggestions were listed under "The Faculty Vocation", noting that faculty members should:

1. Have some extended experience of ministry as helpers in the spiritual formation of others.
2. Be committed to the school as community and not only to the discipline as a profession.
3. Have a sense of the connections of the intellectual, professional and spiritual dimensions of theological education.
4. Be ready to participate in opportunities for spiritual formation of themselves and students.
5. Be open to dialogical learning, team-teaching and student participation in the teaching-learning process.

Student evaluation. Lest their fellow professors feel that the emphasis on responsibility and evaluation was falling too heavily upon the faculty, Babin's team dealt with the importance of student evaluation as well:

If faculty are to be evaluated . . . , then it follows that students should be carefully evaluated as well. What makes us assume that it is easier to give course grades that accurately reflect growth and awareness than to disclose to students how their spiritual maturity is perceived by others? Neither is easy, nor can the claim be sustained that the evaluations in either case are 100% accurate. Yet we regularly persist in doing the one, and all but totally neglect the other (1972, p. 36).

The report continued:

Surely the people of God have a right to expect that the persons to whom positions of leadership are entrusted (whether ordination is involved or not) will have a lively and vibrant spirituality . . . . The faculty must know the students, have an established set of standards, and be able to evaluate the students in light of those standards. This is not a fearsome thing, as though the faculty took delight in building barriers or thought of themselves as guardians of a gate through which only the perfect could pass. It is rather an aid to the student who can see himself as others see him, can determine progress made or ground lost, can see what needs to be done. The advantage of the regular evaluation by the faculty, aided often by the student's peers and hopefully by the laity as well, is that corrective action, if needed, takes place before it affects the active ministry, before a congregation is less effectively served, before trends have hardened into habits (1972, p. 37).

Aleshire (1985) added that grades alone are insufficient for the evaluation of theological students. "Grades for students should be supplemented by other evaluative measures. These may include rating forms completed by persons in ministry settings and essay evaluations written by professors" (p. 87). Both Chow and Nicholls, in articles already noted (1995), suggested adding student self-evaluation forms to other input from teaching staff, counsellors and the student's local ministry supervisor(s). Combining such information should help to form a reasonably accurate assessment of the student's spiritual development in a way that is both "observable and communicable" (Chow, p. 221).

BALANCING ACADEMIC AND SPIRITUAL CONCERNS

Smith (1988) posed the question in the minds of many theological educators when she wrote, "If we offer courses in spirituality, how can we avoid sliding from the academically acceptable into a kind of substanceless meandering into that which is personally 'meaningful' but intellectually indefensible?" (p. 82). Authors went their separate ways on this question, some urging greater integration and others doing the opposite.

Ferris (1979) believed that the problem was mainly one of recognising what has been effective in the past and implementing this knowledge at the seminary: "Seminaries have long recognised that the development of spiritual gifts and a spirit of helpfulness is important for effectiveness in pastoral ministry, but few have ever made the development of these qualities the integrative focus of the training program" (p. 7). His pastor = helper model would use this approach, taking the best of other programmes that stress the transfer of information and the development of skills, but putting more emphasis on the helping aspect.

George Schner's concern was that students end up being internally divided when there is a false division between the academic and the spiritual in the curriculum. His solution was that "it is better to conceive of both the academic and the spiritual exercises of the divinity school to be formation, and to seek out the common principles operative in both aspects of the one enterprise" (1985, p. 97). Gilpin agreed that fragmentation is a problem because seminaries are engaged "both in service to the purposes of the church and to the purposes of North American higher education" (1987, p. 6), and that could lead to a conflict between "ministerial education" and graduate "religious studies."

Although it is tempting to defend the seminary's concern for spiritual formation by simply adding courses to the curriculum, Jane Smith was certainly correct when she asserted that "many, if not most of the courses, in our curricula

have the potential of opening doors to new levels of spiritual awareness" (1988, p. 89). Unfortunately, she then went on to oppose the addition of courses in "techniques" of spirituality as unacademic and only accepted courses on the comparative history of the ways in which spirituality has been understood. "Opening doors to new levels of spiritual awareness" can only be effective if there is freedom to practice spirituality, such as praying together about an issue as it arises in class discussion. A mere analysis of spirituality will not meet the objective of deepening the students' spiritual lives.[10]

Even so, there are changes that can be made within courses that are not directly related to spiritual formation. Tite Tiénou (1987) was concerned about "assignment patterns which leave little time for the labour of reflection" and listed it as one of the causes of "theological malaise" in African theological education. Theological educators do their students no favours by assigning so much work that students have little time to meditate on what they have studied.

Classroom attitudes are also important, as Amirtham and Pryor's book noted in a section entitled, "Some Creative Steps in Spiritual Formation":

> Spiritual formation will not be on the explicit agenda of many courses . . . because often it is approached more easily indirectly than directly. But in certain ways even the predominant mood, the learning climate and the relationship between teachers and students in any theological course contribute to the overall spiritual formation process. Therefore attention should be given also to the unconscious factors which affect trust and mistrust, openness or closedness (n.d., p. 161).

EXTRA-CURRICULAR AREAS

Although most spiritual formation takes place outside of the classroom, some professors need to be reminded of that fact. Babin asserted that the entire seminary staff should be involved in community prayer and worship because "what faculty and administration do about common worship speaks so loudly the student will hardly hear what they say" (1972, p. 28). This particular point was echoed in the WCC report: "Spiritual formation needs to find expression in a life of common worship, prepared and attended by both students and staff" (Amirtham and Pryor, n. d., p. 160). Ochola (1989) agreed:

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[10] For a good reference on current evangelical thinking on this subject, including a suggested bibliography, see Hingley (1990).

Lively chapel services should be planned and made indispensable for both the staff and students. These activities [should be] viewed as an integral part of a student's education [and] should be executed with initiative expected of the student rather than from administrative coercion (p. 20).

Wilson Chow (1995), writing from an Asian perspective, made the same point as his African colleague:

The chapel time should not be limited to worship or preaching. It can be a very useful meeting to bridge between faculty and students, or to link the seminary to the outside world and the church at large. Mutual sharing of experiences, feelings, viewpoints and areas of concern during chapel times proves a great blessing both to faculty and to students in my school. The otherwise routine daily gatherings, if thoughtfully arranged ahead of time, can become refreshing and edifying moments. They promote fellowship among members in the school.

. . . Communal activities outside the classroom should be a deliberate part of the program. These include outings, retreats, days of prayer, spiritual-exercises week, and communal meals. Such occasions are necessary to create a solidarity among faculty and students (p. 225).

Faculty involvement with students outside of the classroom can, of course, be limited by time pressures on professors who are writing books or carrying extra administrative or ministerial loads. Watson Omulokoli (1992) feared that such faculty isolation from students could be a detriment to student development:

Once identified, recruited and enlisted in Christian service, those being prepared for theological and ecclesiastical leadership require adequate direction, guidance and moral support at the all-important training stage. . . . More often than not, the executors of training schemes are not aware of, let alone involved in, the detailed programme and schedule of the student (p. 20).

In what kinds of activities should faculty and students spend time together? Edwards listed a number of possibilities such as small groups, special days or weeks for consideration of spiritual life, chapel and worship, courses and activities for families, community meals and joint staff/student committees on spiritual life (1980, p. 28ff). Henry Griffith (1988) felt that there was a greater need for more "one to one discipling situations between the teachers and

students. This can best be done during evangelism trips away from campus, but times set aside for prayer and discussion can also be important" (p. 52).

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AFRICAN WRITERS

Peter Sarpong, writing as the chairman of the Roman Catholic bishops' conference in Ghana, is one of few African writers who have attempted to contextualize spiritual formation, and he only made brief reference to the issue (1989). He noted that in African traditional religion the priest is to be an embodiment of the divinity, even to the extent of being physically possessed by the spirit of the divinity. The parallel for African Christianity is that theological students should be so "possessed" by the Holy Spirit that their lives show the character of God in their ministry (p. 5).

Tite Tiénou, writing about the challenges facing the African church, included tension between academic and popular theology. Although his main concern was theological, his comments also have relevance for similar tensions in theological education because of his concern for balance between academic and popular theology:

> On the evangelical scene, a lot is happening theologically in Africa at the popular level, while little is happening at the academic. The situation is alarming because popular theology is by no means always grounded in and governed by Scripture. The way in which some pastors preach and give counsel may be totally opposed to sound scriptural interpretation.

> It may yet prove, however, to be providential that there is a gap between academic and popular theology within African Christianity. For the solution to that situation, I suggest, lies uniquely within the reach of African evangelicals. They are in fact strategically positioned to assume the theological initiative in Africa by implementing a third way in African theology, a way which remains restricted neither to mere scholastic discussions nor to a poorly rooted popular theology (1990, p. 50).

It would appear that African writers are concentrating on the importance of spiritual formation rather than on how to accomplish it in a contextualized sense. Therefore, that is an area where more contributions are needed from African Christians involved in theological education.

The Manifesto, though not specifically an African document, nevertheless emphasises the importance of having contextually relevant theology (Section 1, Contextualization):

Our programmes of theological education must be designed with deliberate reference to the contexts in which they serve. We are at fault that our curricula so often appear either to have been imported whole from abroad, or to have been handed down unaltered from the past. . . . To become familiar with the context in which the biblical message is to be lived and preached is no less vital to a well-rounded programme than to become familiar with the content of that biblical message.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature reviewed above shows that the spiritual formation of theological students has been a major theme of discussion for theological educators in many parts of the world over the last three decades. Taking account of the range of issues, perspectives, and insights on display in the literature, we may work towards understandings and approaches suitable for our own institutions, in order more faithfully to pursue this essential element for all biblically-informed theological education.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Fertility and Faith: The Ethics of Human Fertilization

Brendan McCarthy
Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997

As McCarthy states in his first chapter, 'The whole area of human fertilization and embryology has become a moral and legal minefield'. 'Fertility and Faith' is an attempt to grapple with the complex moral context of recent British legislation and debate on the subject. This does make the book of greater interest to a British readership, but the issues discussed have a general and increasing relevance, and the structure of the book makes it possible to avoid the sometimes lengthy discussions of the British debate while still profiting from the overall argument being put forward by the author. McCarthy himself is a pastor, who has had personally to face the question of the compatibility of modern infertility treatments with the Christian faith.

He begins with a discussion of the purpose and findings of the Warnock Committee, which was set up in 1982 by the British government under the chairmanship of the philosopher, Mary Warnock. Its remit was 'to consider recent and potential developments in medicine and science related to embryology', and to make appropriate policy recommendations on the subject to the British parliament.

A strength of the book is its concern to lay a sound ethical foundation before addressing the specific issues, which include artificial insemination, egg and embryo donation, in vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood, embryo research and storage, and abortion. McCarthy notes that a weakness of many Christian contributions to the debate surrounding the Warnock Committee, was the tendency to express an opinion on such questions without dealing with the fundamental moral issues involved. Indeed a major criticism of the Warnock Committee itself was that it did not adequately explain the moral reasoning which lay behind its recommendations. McCarthy's own discussion begins therefore with a brief consideration of Christian ethics, and of the relationship between morality and legislation. In the course of his discussion he rejects the idea that every moral issue should be the object of legislation, arguing rather that this should be the case 'only if it can be shown that individuals are at risk, that the fundamental order of society is threatened, or that the rest of the natural order is seriously endangered' (p.58).

The fundamental question for many of the issues discussed in the book is the status of the human embryo. According to McCarthy, the view adopted by the Warnock Committee was that it was akin to an animal. Consequently, they argued that legislation should protect it from pain and suffering and ensure that its nature was not compromised, for example by cross-fertilization, but took the view that it should not be given the same rights as a member of society. Recognising the absolute importance of this issue, McCarthy devotes two chapters to it.

In the first of these, while noting that the Bible itself does not directly address the issue, he finds a number of texts which indicate that some of the biblical authors saw the embryo as a personal entity, and argues that the Scriptures as a whole support a high view of the status of both embryo and foetus. In the next chapter he discusses the theological issues. First he considers the evidence of church tradition. Some theologians at certain periods did make a distinction between the 'formed' and the 'unformed' foetus, regarding the abortion of the 'unformed' as less serious although still wrong. Such a distinction was not made however in the primitive church when all abortions were equally regarded as murder, and modern Catholicism has also taken this position, accompanied until recently by most Protestant churches too. McCarthy then considers, and rejects, the view that it is possession of a soul that establishes the full humanity of a foetus or embryo, arguing both that the notion of the soul is imprecise, and that, even if one accepted a dualist understanding of the soul (which he does not), one could not know at what point an individual could be said to be possessed of one. He also rejects the prevalent contemporary view that personhood is tied to certain functions, so that the question of the personhood of the embryo is determined by possession of those functions. Rather he argues that the foetus and embryo should have the same status as the adult, because they are the earliest form of the adult. An embryo is already 'one of us', although at a different stage of development. It has value therefore, just as an adult has value, and already bears the image of God. McCarthy defines this 'image' in terms of 'an endowment by God of a relationship with him and with others' (p.136), which in his view, drawing from Barth, belongs to all mankind as all are elect in Christ.

Moving on to the discussion of infertility treatment, McCarthy makes a fundamental point, certainly in the context of the debate in the West, when he categorically rejects the view that fertility is a human right, a view which would entail the absurd conclusion that God is obligated to provide it. It is simply a gift of God, as is all that is good in life. Nevertheless, he argues that where fertility is diminished or absent it is not inappropriate to seek alleviation of that condition, but always within Christian ethical limits, and McCarthy examines how

certain churches have interpreted those limits. He himself stresses that any infertility treatment must not put at risk the family unit.

In the later chapters of the book McCarthy considers individual issues. Thus, for example, he sees no moral problem with artificial insemination by a husband, but rejects artificial insemination of a woman from a donor not her husband (D.I.), on the ground that it constitutes an unacceptable intrusion into a couple's marriage. McCarthy concludes that a marriage is better served by accepting infertility 'than in looking beyond the marriage for a fulfilment of one aspect of a couple's experience of sex' (p.183). Paradoxically, however, he does not think that D.I. should be illegal, as it cannot be proved that it undermines marriage, but he does emphatically argue that it should be illegal for single women or those in homosexual relationships, on the grounds that in such cases it would undermine the status of the family and denigrate the father's role. A parallel problem is that of egg donation to infertile women, and of embryo donation where both partners are infertile, and McCarthy rejects both. Moreover, he argues that embryo donation should actually be made illegal as it allows the creation of embryos without any parental responsibility on the part of the genetic parents, and so tends to treat children as commodities.

The author approves the continued use of *in vitro* fertilisation as long as it does not involve artificial insemination by donor, or by egg or embryo donation, and is given only to married couples. Also he argues that there must be an intention to implant all the embryos created unless some are seriously genetically malformed. As the author admits, however, in the present practice of *in vitro* fertilisation numbers of embryos are created which will never be used and which are therefore subsequently destroyed. He devotes an entire chapter to the issue of embryo research, arguing that it should only be permissible in cases where it is likely to be beneficial to the embryo concerned. No research should be allowed which causes embryos to be harmed or destroyed.

The book is not always easy reading. The style can sometimes be heavy, and the attempt to discuss a wide range of questions from first principles occasionally entails the compression of complex issues and arguments, with a consequent lack of lucidity. The initial somewhat philosophical discussion of ethics is a particular example of this. In a book which uses technical scientific and theological language, the definition of some terms and expressions, such as 'deontological', 'the primitive streak', 'superovulation', would also assist the reader.

There is also at times a too rapid dismissal of positions the author finds uncongenial, as for example his rejection of the traditional dualistic, body-soul, approach to human nature ('a false view of human nature', p.103), or of the view

that artificial insemination by donor constitutes an adulterous act. Indeed some of the author's conclusions are surprising and would be questioned by many, as when he finds no moral objection to the practice of surrogate pregnancy. Even more questionable is his understanding of Scripture as merely 'a witness to God's revelation' (p.42), which reflects a neo-orthodox approach, evident also elsewhere, and necessarily entails a diminished view of its authority.

Nevertheless, the book is a very useful and full introduction to the whole area. It makes clear the complexity of some of the issues involved, and the consequently wide variety of Christian opinions put forward. It identifies the central questions in the debate and so avoids getting lost in the details, and it stimulates the reader's own thinking. No doubt some of the questions under discussion are of little concern to many or most African churches at the present time, but they are likely to become live issues at some point in the future, even perhaps the near future. Careful reading of McCarthy's book could help prepare the church to face that eventuality.

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The Epistle to the Romans.
New International Commentary.

Douglas J. Moo
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996. i-xxv, 1-1012.
ISBN 0-8028-2317-3 $50.00

Readers of this journal will be familiar with Douglas Moo through his commentary on James for the Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series. Moo's commentary on Romans began as a two volume work on the Greek text of Romans for the Wycliffe Exegetical Series. When the publishers decided to cancel that series after the first volume had been published, Eerdmans asked him to rewrite what he had already done and complete the commentary as a one volume replacement for John Murray's commentary on Romans in the New International Commentary series.

The thirty-five page introduction includes treatments of historical background, literary integrity, audience, genre, purpose, theme, structure, and an outline of the letter. The format of the commentary also includes short introductions to major sections of the letter. Treatments of smaller portions of the letter begin with the author's translation of the passage, brief introductory remarks about the passage as a whole, and then detailed comments arranged one to two verses at a time. Several excursuses are interspersed throughout the commentary. Unfortunately, these are not listed in the table of contents. Indices include subjects, authors, scripture references, and early extra-biblical literature.

The text of the commentary itself contains English only, including translations of biblical and modern languages. However, the original texts of these translations appear in the footnotes. This feature makes the commentary useful for those lacking working knowledge of these languages, yet also worthwhile for those needing to consult the original texts. In addition, while Moo clearly enumerates and explains interpretive options on debated passages, detailed interaction with other scholars and scholarly positions is reserved for the footnotes, meaning that Moo's own line of thought can be followed in the text with less distraction.

Moo's reading of Romans can be described as traditional, evangelical and Reformed. It is traditional in that Moo reads Romans as a theological treatise more than as a letter. While recent scholarship has turned toward viewing Romans like any of Paul's other letters--as a letter to Christians in a specific locale about specific issues related to those Christians, Moo believes

that interpreters should be interested in "theological and philosophical concerns of the biblical authors" (22). While he does acknowledge that Romans is a genuine letter, both his remarks in the introduction and his comments on the body of the letter reveal that Moo reads Romans more as abstract theology apart from Paul's or the Roman Christians' circumstances. For that reason (with the exception of his reading of Romans 7:7-25, which he takes to be referring to Israel rather than to Paul's own experience), one finds little that varies from a customary conservative Protestant understanding of the letter.

The commentary is evangelical in that Moo's deeply conservative and evangelical faith breathes throughout his reading of the letter. Hardly the so-called "neutral" scholar examining Romans from a safe distance, Moo finds Paul's theology in Romans to be living theology. However, this is an academic commentary. The preacher looking for that theology will need to slog through the interpretive details to find it.

Finally, Moo's interpretation lies squarely within the Reformed tradition. For example, he reads Romans 9 as an account of individual predestination rather than as a broad argument about God's elective purposes among the nations. As expected with any detailed commentary on a letter like Romans, a reviewer can find numerous details with which to disagree. To engage the commentary on such a level would be to miss the overall contribution that this commentary makes to the study of Romans. Moo treats fairly and clearly those interpretive options with which he disagrees. He states his own exegetical choices and his reasons for them unambiguously. While one may disagree with his position at times, one is never left wondering how he got there. Moo's coverage of the relevant scholarly literature, especially in German, is exemplary.

Traditional, evangelical and Reformed-just these qualities make this commentary a worthy successor to Murray's long-standard commentary on Romans, which stood firmly in that same tradition.

The sheer size of this commentary warrants one final comment. Eerdmans recently republished the NIC in a fresh, larger format so that newer, longer volumes can still lay flat when opened. However, Moo's volume is so lengthy (1012 pages) that the book will not stay open when within 200 pages of either end. A work of this length needs to be published in two volumes.

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Romans: Sacra Pagina 6

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Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996.   i-xii, 1-503.
ISBN 0-8146-5808-3. $29.95.

Byrne's Romans is part of the Sacra Pagina ("Sacred Page") series on the New Testament. All volumes are written by Roman Catholic scholars. Intended for everyone from students to biblical professionals, the series seeks to provide both a serious critical reading of the text without losing sight of its religious significance. Byrne, now teaching at Jesuit Theological College in Melbourne, Australia, is no stranger to Romans or Pauline theology. His Oxford dissertation was published under the title 'Sons of God'--'Seed of Abraham' in 1979. He also authored a popular commentary, Reckoning with Romans, in 1986.

A thirty-six page introduction includes a treatment of recent interpretation of Romans, why Paul wrote Romans, Paul's rhetorical task, the structure of the letter, brief comments on specific interpretive issues, and finally, a six page bibliography. The body of the commentary (approximately 425 pages) breaks the letter down into small sections. Each section includes the author's translation of the passage, an interpretive portion that constitutes the main substance of Byrne's reading of the letter, detailed notes that support his reading, and a brief bibliography. Each larger division of the letter (at 1:18; 5:1; 6:1; 9:1; 12:1) is also prefaced by an introduction.

The commentary concludes with indices arranged according to scripture reference, ancient writings, author, and subject.

Byrne sees Romans as Paul's attempt to bring the Christians in Rome under his sphere of authority as "apostle to the Gentiles". He does this by "reminding" (15:15) them of what they already know, hoping to increase their allegiance to Paul's law-free gospel. This could, Paul hoped, result in their participation in the Collection for Jerusalem as well as their help with Paul's planned mission to the West.

Byrne's rhetorical approach to the letter sets this volume apart from the plethora of other commentaries on Romans. Borrowing from modern rhetorical theory, Byrne reads Romans as an "instrument of persuasion," focusing more on the text itself apart from historical reconstructions behind the text. For example, Byrne closely follows Paul's argument throughout Romans with little attempt to relate that argument to any particular circumstances in Paul's ministry

or among the Roman Christians. Whereas many commentaries read Paul's argument within a context of a larger body of Christian doctrine, Byrne adheres fairly tightly to Paul's argument as it progresses through Romans alone. At 3:8, where Paul specifically mentions charges that he promotes sin (by downplaying the Mosaic Law), Byrne allows a brief comment regarding this being the general kind of objection that has followed Paul, but makes no attempt to relate this opposition to any situation Paul or the Romans faced as he wrote the letter. When he comes to the disputed passage concerning the "strong" and the "weak" in 14:1-15:13, Byrne refuses to identify these appellations with any groups in Rome. He reviews arguments that do make such identifications, points out problems with such arguments, then interprets the passage as a general call for tolerance.

The strength of this approach lies with its close attention to Paul's argument itself. Yet can the historical context that shapes that argument be ignored? I think not. I do not believe we can ignore questions about why Paul argued *in this way* about *these specific issues* to *these people*. Nevertheless, Byrne's consistent focus on Paul's argument as it progresses through the letter keeps his interpretation from drifting off into the abstract realm of systematic theology.

Students in particular will find this volume useful. Byrne's clear focus, concise comments, and lively style keeps the reader from getting bogged down in details. The short but useful bibliographies found throughout the commentary consistently direct students to the best secondary literature on a passage or subject. While it does not have the depth of some of the massive recent commentaries on Romans, this brevity makes it all the more accessible to students. At the same time, brevity should not be mistaken for lack of substance. Byrne's reading of Romans is obviously well-informed. For that reason, the commentary will prove useful to scholars as well.

Evangelical scholars and libraries on the continent may not be familiar with the *Sacra Pagina* series due to its Roman Catholic origins and North American publisher. But this commentary belongs on library shelves everywhere. For a clearly written, fresh interpretation of the text, Byrne is my first recommendation.

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THE GODS OF AFRICA OR THE GOD OF THE BIBLE?
The Snares of African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective

Lenard Nyirongo
Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
Potchefstroom, South Africa. 1997. Pp. 212. ISBN 1 86822 293 4

This remarkable book of 212 pages on ATR in biblical perspective deserves widespread knowledge and use throughout the continent and abroad. It is thoroughly biblical and written clearly for all to understand.

The book has four parts. Part I with five chapters deals with "Knowing God and worshipping him aright." Nyirongo begins by surveying some of the literature by African theologians together with early Christian thought concerning the value of non-Christian religions. The common strand among them is the belief that Africans before the gospel had "a genuine knowledge of God" with their "own ways of communion with deity," in the words of Desmond Tutu (p.4). As John Mbiti says, "The Gospel is 'that final completing element that crowns their traditional religion, and brings its flickering light to full brilliance'" (p.5). The author concludes the first chapter by saying there is a need to test such statements. "The aim of this book is to show from God's Word that the claims made by the above theologians are a scheme of Satan, aimed at hindering many Africans from obeying and believing the true Gospel" (p. 9).

Chapter 2 is a survey of the biblical teaching concerning the knowledge of God in which he discusses special revelation and general revelation. He then asks the question, "Did the African tribesman have true faith in God before the Gospel came to Africa?" The author directs the reader to "the Bible to find the answer" (p.16). In contrast many African writers appeal to their African experience of seeing God as the great chief who can only be approached by "those nearest to him in rank." Hence Sawyerr and others defend the African practice of approaching God through the cultic and nature spirits. In conclusion Nyirongo believes the "evidences" for a true knowledge of God among the Africans has "no biblical foundation" (p.23).

Chapter 3 deals with "the African and Biblical view of the spirit and visible worlds"; Chapter 4 deals with "The African religious experience: idolatry or true worship?" and Chapter 5 deals with "Who is the mediator: Christ, ancestors, priests, mediums or...?" The chapters are replete with quotations from various anthropologists and theologians concerning the traditional African

beliefs and practices. After each exposition of traditional beliefs he then treats the biblical perspective with a generous treatment of Scriptural teaching.

For example in his discourse on idolatry or true worship in ATR, he outlines in three pages the claims of those who deny idolatry among the Africans, including Parrinder, Mbiti, Metuh and Gumede. He then provides five pages of biblical teaching on worship. He concludes with six pages of evidence of idolatry among the Africans. Having surveyed parallels of idolatry with other peoples, he writes, "Do these examples sound foreign to the African worshipper? Only pride and stubbornness would make the African deny his identification with, not only the Egyptians, the Cannanites, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans – but with the rest of the pagan communities who have not yet turned to Christ." He concludes, "Adam's fall has corrupted *all* the races" (p.50).

Part II treats "Man's state and destiny" in four chapters. Topics include the African and biblical view of sin, man's judgement, salvation and immortality, fellowship with the dead and the view of time, history and progress. In each case the author expounds the African view by the thorough use of various sources, followed by the exposition of the biblical view with a generous use of Scripture. He concludes by stating that "there is a wide gap between the African and biblical views." "The reason is simply that a wrong relationship with God results in a wrong view of God's dealings with man. What the African needs to do is to first turn from his idolatry and trust in Christ. Then his eyes will see clearly" (p. 78).

Part III in five chapters deals with "Man's identity in the community." This part includes the African and biblical view of man's constitution and identity, the marriage bond, family life, community and church life and the office, authority, power and responsibility. Part IV in four chapters treats "Suffering, health and prosperity." This fourth part discusses suffering, sickness, healing and witchcraft. Surprisingly chapter eighteen deals with "the place of art in the African community and the church." The book concludes with six pages of bibliography.

This is a remarkable book for several reasons. It is a fairly comprehensive book of 212 pages. The author, Lenard Nyirongo, is an African who takes a biblical view of ATR very similar to the late Byang Kato. His biblical theological understanding is mainstream evangelical which should resonate with all Bible believing Christians on the continent. The book is written with clarity and simplicity of outline. Amazingly, Nyirongo is not a theologian by training. He holds a BSc.Ed. degree and a post graduate diploma in Productivity Improvement and is by profession a management consultant in Kitwe, Zambia.
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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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