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THE AIDS PANDEMIC: *Any Solution?*

An AJET Editorial

The lead article in this issue is a brilliant prognosis of the church in Africa in the 21st century. No such portrayal could be given without consideration of the AIDS pandemic of unprecedented magnitude which is sweeping across Africa and the world.

The statistics are mind boggling, especially when one realises that the true dimensions of the epidemic are unknown. The reported cases of AIDS are far fewer than the reality. Many deaths are reportedly due to TB, malaria or other diseases when, in fact, the HIV infection has destroyed their immune system. Furthermore, HIV infections are frequently not known by the infected persons, for they may live many years without any visible symptoms.

At the start of the 21st century, some 23.3 million Africans south of the Sahara are estimated by UNAIDS/WHO to have HIV infection or AIDS which is almost 70% of the world's total. Whereas life expectancy at birth in southern Africa rose from 44 years in 1950 to 59 in 1990, life expectancy is set to decline to just 45 years between 2005 and 2010. In Zimbabwe life expectancy is projected to drop from 61 to 33 years. 80% of those dying with AIDS are workers between the productive ages of 20-50. AIDS is thus slowly, strangling businesses and placing an extreme burden on the economies of Africa. 13 million children have been orphaned by AIDS who must then be cared for by their ageing grandparents or become street children. This only increases the social burden of poverty, crime, illiteracy and disease.

Is there any solution to this pandemic? The solution exported from western democracies, alienated from God, is *safe sex*. Plastered on the walls of market places are invitations to play sex, albeit, with the alleged safety of a condom. A man talks intimately with a woman, 'Let's talk,' promoting the sale of *Trust* condoms.

But this solution has not proved effective. Neither is it moral. Western medicine is firmly rooted in the Enlightenment paradigm of natural sciences which reduces health and disease to natural cause and effect. But AIDS cannot be treated like other past epidemics. One cannot ignore the socio-cultural aspect in the transmission of AIDS. There is a religious and moral dimension in the spread of AIDS. God has ordained that only in the intimacy of marriage may there be sexual relations with God's blessing. There have always been painful consequences for premarital and extra marital sex. AIDS is only the latest manifestation of these tragic consequences. Information and condoms are not sufficient to tackle the AIDS epidemic. 90% of Kenyans know about AIDS and its transmission, and condoms have been advertised *ad nausea* without any change in behaviour.

Herein lies the failure of this western scientific approach to AIDS. Knowledge alone cannot stop the spread of AIDS. What is needed is a change in life style, a change in patterns of sexual behaviour. By the testimony of many, the condom advertisements only promote immorality. The use of condoms is neither safe nor moral. Only the Christian Church has the answer in the transforming work of God in the lives of believers. Only through biblical instruction and the empowering of the Holy Spirit can life styles be changed and the transmission of the HIV virus cease.

The Christian Church, like a sleeping giant, is beginning to awaken and to assert her moral influence in society to eliminate the dread disease of AIDS. Gradually, the Christian Church is showing compassion on those who have contracted HIV and manifesting courage to teach a biblical lifestyle to prevent the spread of AIDS.

Instructional materials are being prepared for teaching the subject of AIDS and biblical morality. A four year curriculum with 100 lessons entitled, *Why Wait?*, has been developed for secondary schools. 80% of Secondary Schools in Malawi now use this in their curriculum and it is now being introduced in certain secondary schools in Kenya. There is hope, not in talking about safe sex but in the transformation which comes from conversion and biblical teaching. It is time for the Christian Church to become proactive and lead the way in moral reformation through biblical teaching.

THE CHURCH IN AFRICA *In the Twenty-First Century:* Characteristics, Challenges and Opportunities

Danny McCain

The following article is based on the keynote address given by Rev. Dr. Danny McCain at the Heinrick Kramer Institute Consultation on Church and Society, Jos, Nigeria, on 11th May 1999. On the basis of church developments within the last few decades of the 20th century, McCain projects into the future to describe the characteristics, challenges and opportunities of the church in Africa in the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

Apart from God, no one knows the future with any degree of absolute certainty. In biblical times God raised up prophets who most often had a message for their contemporary world but who would often also make authoritative predictions about the future. I am not a prophet so I can not claim to have any divine revelation about the church in Africa in the twenty-first century. However, a careful observer can make certain predictions about the future based upon the record of the past.

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No one has ever been in the twenty-first century before. However, based upon the history of the church in the twentieth century and particularly on the last decade or two of the twentieth century, we can make certain projections about what the church is going to look like in the twenty-first century. The things about which we can be most certain are the things that are likely to take place in the early part of the twenty-first century. Our current conditions anticipate that quite well. However, the further we get beyond the twentieth century the more speculative our predictions will be.

Before I make my observations about the church in the twenty-first century, I will make two preliminary qualifications. First, although I have travelled in other parts of Africa, my experience of Africa has largely been in West Africa and particularly Nigeria. So while my observations may often fit the continent as a whole, at times they may seem more particular to the West African context. And in any case I will draw most of my examples from the part of Africa with which I am most familiar. Secondly, my observations are primarily limited to the Protestant churches. Although I have regular contact on a personal and professional basis with Roman Catholics, the comments following primarily refer to Protestant Christianity in Africa.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The African Church in the twenty-first century, like all churches, will have certain characteristics. I suggest that the African Church will develop the following characteristics.

Bigger

At the beginning of the twentieth century it was estimated that about three percent of the people on the African continent professed to be Christians. The twentieth century has been remarkably successful for Christianity so that at the beginning of the twenty-

first century, almost fifty percent of the people in Africa claim to be Christians. The last two decades of the twentieth century have seen a great explosion of Christian activity and Christian growth.

One example will be sufficient. The Baptist Mission began its work in the south-west part of Nigeria. It only moved to the north in the second part of the century. Most of the Baptist churches in the northern part of Nigeria prior to that time were planted by and for the Yoruba traders who lived in the north. However, during the last forty years, the Baptist Church has experienced tremendous growth among the northern indigents. For example, in 1972, Rev. Andrew Auta went to Lafia in the present Nasarawa State to start a Baptist Church. There were no Baptists in the town at that time. He has been there for the past twenty-eight years. At the present time, his church has 1400 people in the Hausa service and another 300 in the English service every Sunday. In addition, his church has planted four other Baptist churches in the city of Lafia and 52 Baptist churches in the Lafia Local Government Area.[1] This is remarkable growth.

Pentecostal churches have experienced even greater growth. The Assemblies of God Church has made serious advances in northern Nigeria and the Deeper Life has grown from being a Bible study in the 1960's to a movement in the 1970's to a strong church in the 1980's. In the last twenty years, it has grown to be one of the largest churches in Nigeria.[2]

There is every reason to believe that the church will continue to grow in the first few decades of the next century. I project that most of the remaining pagan areas in Africa will yield to Christianity within the next twenty-five years. In addition, I believe that there is going to be slow but steady progress of the church among Muslims. The net result is going to be a church that continues to grow and prosper in the twenty-first century.

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1 Rev. Auta is a former student of mine. This data comes from personal conversations from him.

2 It must be observed that at least some of the Pentecostal growth and probably most of the Deeper Life growth has come from second and third generation Christians.

Younger

It has usually been the younger people of any society who have embraced new things including new religions. However, after Christianity has become a part of the culture, many times the young people become interested in other 'new things' and the average membership of the church becomes older and older.[3] However, the remarkable thing about the church in Africa is that most of the growth in the church during the last two decades is from the younger generation. This is especially true in the Pentecostal churches. If one attends a meeting of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), he will observe that most of the pastors are under forty years of age. In addition, when one attends many of the 'living churches'[4] in Nigeria and West Africa, he will discover that most of those in the congregation are much younger than a comparable church in the West.

There is no reason this trend is going to change. At least for the first few decades of the twenty-first century, the church in Africa is going to continue to be a young church. The youthful nature of the church will continue to give to it much energy and enthusiasm. It will enable the church to have the strength to continue to evangelise and impact the society. However, it will also make the church more susceptible to fanaticism, intolerance and unwise decisions.

More African

The church in Africa was planted largely by European missionaries or those who were trained and heavily influenced by western missionaries.[5] Therefore, the church in Africa took upon

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[3] I read an article some years ago entitled, "The Greying of the Church in America". The thesis of that article was that the church in America is getting older and older. I suspect that this is also true in most other places.

[4] The term 'living church' is often associated with Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and West Africa.

[5] Much of the mission work in West Africa was done by blacks from the West Indies. Perhaps the most outstanding missionary was an African, Bishop Ajai Crowther, who was rescued from slavery and given the best western education.

itself a distinctively Western flavour though this has not been without exceptions. African church leaders like William Wade Harris in Ivory Coast and Garrick Braide in Nigeria were distinctively African in their ministry. The Ethiopian movement in South Africa and the Aladura movement in Nigeria were based upon a much more African that European ecclesiology. However, the fact is that the main Christian denominations and churches in Africa throughout most of the twentieth century have been similar in many ways to their European parent churches. They sing the same hymns. They worship in the same way. Their ministers wear the same ecclesiastical clothing. The structure of the services has been very similar. The ecclesiastical hierarchy is about the same. In fact, if one came from a Baptist church in America and visited a Baptist church in Ogbomoso, Nigeria, he would feel basically at home.

However, during the last two decades of the twentieth century that has started to change. The entire African church is becoming much more African. The singing of western hymns is being replaced by singing African choruses. Africans are expressing their worship and praise to God in much more African ways. Churches which were very rigid and western in their styles of worship are much more open to physical and emotional expressions than a generation ago.[6] Allowing African instruments and dancing in the church was frowned on for many years. However, these practices are being commonly accepted in most of the churches today.

If the last decade is any indicator, the church in the twenty-first century is going to reflect much more of an African flavour than the church in the twentieth century. We are going to see more and more freedom of expression in church services. We are going to see

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[6] The Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) is a good example. Only ten years ago, it would have been very inappropriate for church members to raise their hands in worship or to allow African instruments in a church service. However, this more emotional style of worship is common-place now in many ECWA churches.

a more African style of leadership in the church.[7] We are going to see more distinctively African styles of preaching with more emphasis on story telling and parables than on exposition and logic. The direction of the church in Africa today is toward becoming more African. That tendency is going to continue well into the twenty-first century.

More Lively

One of the growing influences within the African church during the last two decades has been Pentecostalism. Pentecostal phenomenon first entered the church through the Zionist movement in South Africa during the second decade of the twentieth century.[8] In addition, the Aladura movement which developed in Nigeria in the third decade of the twentieth century had distinctively Pentecostal characteristics including a stress on supernatural healing, dreams, visions, prophesy and the speaking in tongues. The Assemblies of God were invited to come into Nigeria in the 1940's to nurture a budding Pentecostal movement. The Assemblies of God Church has grown rapidly during the last fifty years and is now one of the leading Christian denominations in Nigeria.

However, the real growth of Pentecostalism in Africa has taken place during the last thirty years. Immediately after the Nigerian civil war, there was an explosion of interest in Christianity. This began as a movement primarily in universities among young people. Out of the movement have grown the leading Pentecostal churches today including the Church of God Mission, and the

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[7] Many of the independent Pentecostal churches in Nigeria already reflect the more authoritative structure of leadership that is characteristic of traditional African society. These founders of ministries function much like chiefs in a local village. There is little democracy in their organisations though they are open to the wise counsel of elders whom they respect.

[8] Jonathan Hildebrandt, *History of the Church in Africa*, Africa Christian Press, Ghana 1981, p. 222.

Deeper Life Bible Church.[9] Pentecostalism which was once a movement among the lower classes of people has lost that distinctive and has entered the mainstream of African society. More and more Pentecostals are occupying positions in university religion departments and as officers of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).[10]

One of the reasons that Pentecostalism has been received so well in Africa is because many of the basic tenants of Pentecostalism are very consistent with the African worldview. These include:

1. *The Supernatural*

Much of western Christianity has been heavily influenced by an anti-supernatural bias which has tended to lower (if not remove) the emphasis on the supernatural in western churches. This emphasis in the west has been reflected to some extent in the mainstream African churches. However, the supernatural is a very basic part of the traditional African worldview. Therefore, when Pentecostalism came along offering a Biblical version of the supernatural, it was very appealing and quickly adopted by many African Christians.

2. *Demons/Evil Spirits*

Nearly all African traditional religion has believed strongly in the existence of various kinds of evil spirits. These spirits influence human life in many ways. However, the western world under the influence of rationalism has largely rejected the spiritual world, at least in practice if not in theory. This has had some impact upon

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9 These two churches are probably the largest of the newer Pentecostal groups and would also be the largest indigenous churches in Nigeria. However, other groups like the Greater Evangelism World Crusade, Redeemed People's Mission and hundreds of independent Pentecostal churches are growing rapidly and having more and more influence in the Christian world.

10 CAN is a coalition of Christian churches and denominations which was formed in Nigeria to interact with the government on issues that relate to religion and Christianity in Nigeria. It has enabled Christians from all traditions to speak to the government with one voice primarily in opposition to a government that has been perceived as being pro-Islam.

the western church. Though many of the western churches would not deny theologically the existence of demons, they have little understanding and experience with the demonic world. Therefore, there is little if any stress on this phenomenon in their churches. However, Pentecostalism has taken a much more literal interpretation of the teachings of the Bible about demons. Confronting demons and casting out demons has become a major emphasis within Pentecostalism around the world. When Pentecostalism came to Africa, it gave a solid theological blessing to the already existing African recognition of the world of spirits. Therefore, it was quickly embraced. Resisting demons and casting out demons is now a regular part of many Pentecostal church services in Africa and many of the non-Pentecostal church services as well.

3. Divine Healing

Although the traditional African healers used herbs and other natural remedies in their healing process, they almost always utilised spiritual or supernatural practices as well. Healing was something which the spirits had to be involved in. Again, much of the western church, though accepting the miracles of Jesus, have been so influenced by the scientific approach to life that few people expect supernatural healing to take place. Because the child learns from the parent, this has caused a corresponding lack of expectation of the supernatural in Africa. However, Pentecostalism came along stressing that we can expect and experience miracles today of the same nature as the miracles of the biblical day. Since miraculous healing has always been an important part of African traditional beliefs, it was a natural thing to embrace Pentecostalism which believed also in supernatural healing.

4. Emotional and Physical Expressions of Worship

Africans express their emotions though singing and dancing and other physical means of expression. The western world tends to be less emotional and much more reserved in their private and public life. This carried over into the churches which Western missionaries planted in Africa. The typical Anglican or

Presbyterian or Methodist church service in Lagos or Nairobi or Kampala in the past has included choirs wearing robes and singing anthems accompanied by organ music, a type of worship which was characteristic of the middle and upper classes in Europe and America. However, Pentecostalism was at first a movement of the lower classes. As such it encouraged people to express their worship and praise to God in whatever way they felt would be meaningful. Hence Pentecostalism has tended to be much more loud and boisterous in its worship than most of the mainstream churches. When Pentecostalism entered Nigeria in the seventies in a very big way, it found an audience which was ready for the message of free expressions in worship. Africans have always clapped and danced and been comfortably boisterous in their celebrations. Pentecostalism demonstrated that this same kind of physical and emotional expression was legitimate in church.

Pentecostalism has not only influenced Africa though creating Pentecostal churches and denominations. It has influenced nearly all churches today. Twenty years ago, most of the mainline churches attempted to resist the influence of Pentecostalism by denouncing speaking in tongues, forbidding members to dance in the church and denying the miracles which were claimed in the Pentecostal churches. However, most churches today, including the Catholic church, have taken up many of the Pentecostal ways. Their services are much louder and more emotional. There is less anti-tongues speaking rhetoric. More and more mainline churches are stressing supernatural healing. It is undeniable that Pentecostalism has had a very profound effect upon the Christian church during the last few decades.

Since this is true, it is likely that Pentecostalism is going to have more and more influence on the church in Africa in the twenty-first century. The church is going to be louder with more and more freedom to express worship and praise to God in a distinctively African manner.

Softer

Christianity has been a male-dominated religion all throughout its history. Women were excluded from the priesthood in the Old

Testament and also from positions of leadership with only a few exceptions. In the New Testament Paul refused to allow women to have positions of leadership or instruction (I Corinthians 14:34-35; I Timothy 2:11-15). The fact that women have been excluded from leadership in the church is not necessarily a criticism because the church has simply been a reflection of the society as a whole which has been male-dominated.[11] The western missionaries who planted the church in Africa found a culture that was equally as male-dominated as the European culture. With these influences there is little wonder that the African church throughout the twentieth century has largely been a male-dominated entity.

However, the last quarter of the twentieth century has brought remarkable changes to the world with regards to the place of women in society. In most western countries, women are equally as well educated as men and have been able to enter into nearly all job markets including the military and politics. Several nations have had women as their heads of state during the last few decades including Israel, the United Kingdom and even a conservative country like Pakistan. In addition, women have made great strides in the church as well. Many denominations which had reserved positions of leadership only to men have changed their rules to allow for the ordination of women.[12]

This phenomenon is also slowly penetrating the African church as well. Women are beginning to occupy positions which have been reserved for men. The University of Jos employed the first women lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies during the 1990's.

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[11] It can be argued that Christianity has been in the forefront of elevating the status of women in society. Christianity recognised the inherent equality of all persons and this truth has slowly influenced society over the last century.

[12] Most Pentecostal churches and some of the mainstream churches like the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and the United Methodist Church have opened its doors to women clergy. However, the Anglican Church and most of the evangelical churches, though allowing more and more positions of leadership for women, have resisted the ordination of women. The Roman Catholic Church also continues to resist the ordination of women both in Africa and other parts of the world.

Women clergymen are becoming more and more common. In Nigeria in 1998 Archbishop Benson Idahosa died, leaving a vacuum in the leadership of the Church of God Mission which he had founded and led. To the surprise of many (and the dismay of not a few), it was his wife who took up the mantle of leadership. She appears to have been accepted by the church and the society at large.

These small indications of female leadership are only a foretaste of what the African church is going to experience in the twenty-first century. More and more women are going to become pastors. More seminaries are going to open their doors to female lecturers. African theologians in the future will come increasingly from both genders. Women will occupy leadership positions in their denominations and in theological institutions. The domination of the African church by men will be thoroughly broken in the twenty-first century. And with the ascension of women into leadership positions, the church will see a gentler and softer style of church leadership. The maternal instincts of women will make the church a more humane institution.

Brighter[13]

The Church in Africa has made amazing progress during the twentieth-century. It has grown from just a handful of training institutions to hundreds of seminaries, Bible colleges and other training institutions across the continent. These institutions have trained thousands of pastors who are ably serving the church today. The religion departments in African universities have produced some outstanding scholars. Unfortunately, even with this

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[13] I recognise that the term 'brighter' is often used as a synonym for 'more clever' or 'smarter', and may be viewed as having to do with intelligence rather than education. It is obvious that there are many people who are very clever or smart who are not well educated. Education does have a tendency to teach one how to think which, in one sense of the word, makes a person appear more intelligent. However, the major focus of this point is that the African church will be better educated in the twenty-first century.

remarkable progress. Africa lags behind the western world in the academic development of its pastors, church leaders and theological educators.

However, progress is being made. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, at least six major Protestant seminaries have started offering masters degrees in Nigeria[14] in addition to those which are offered in the public universities. I estimate that at least twenty percent of the African staff of these institutions have studied abroad. More and more Africans are writing textbooks and other serious theological aids.[15] Africans have distinguished themselves in Europe and America as students in the best seminaries and universities and many Africans are being invited to join the staffs of western institutions.

All of these things tell us that the African church in the twenty-first century is going to be much bettered educated. African scholars in the future are going to be less dependent upon Western institutions, books and academic research.[16] They are going to be much more capable of doing serious exegesis and better able to challenge their people to think. The African church in the future is going to be brighter than the past.

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[14] These include: Jos Evangelical Theological Seminary, Jos; Theological College of Northern Nigeria, Bukuru; Igbaja Seminary, Igbaja; Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso; Wesley International Theological Seminary, Owerri; and Evangel Seminary, Jos.

[15] Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS) is an organisation which is encouraging and assisting Africans to produce serious scholarly works. Several books have already been produced by African scholars and several more are in the process.

[16] This is not a call for a withdrawal of the African church from the rest of the world. In fact, because of advanced communication and especially because of the Internet, the world is becoming a much smaller place.

CHALLENGES OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As reflected above, the church in Africa in the twenty-first century has a bright future. However, the church will also face some serious challenges. The following is a sampling of some of the challenges which the church in Africa will face in the next century.

Growth without Mediocrity

As indicated above, the African Church in the twenty-first century will continue to grow and expand. However, there is a big challenge associated with that. It is a problem which has already seriously manifested itself in the twentieth century. The problem is numerical growth without a corresponding spiritual, intellectual and moral growth. The African Church has often been described as 'a mile wide and an inch deep'.[17] There is much numerical growth. There is great enthusiasm in church services. Much money is donated to the church and religious causes. Christian terminology permeates one's conversation. Public prayers are a part of most public non-religious meetings. Hundreds of new church buildings are being built. People are anxious to take upon themselves religious titles. Even evangelism is practiced with enthusiasm and commitment.

However, in spite of all these positive features, Christianity has failed to halt the growing corruption in Africa. Though the ethical teachings of Jesus are at the heart of Christianity, the Church in Africa continues to be guilty of many of the kinds of corruption which characterise the society as a whole. Preaching is often loud and emotional but devoid of substance. Educational institutions have lower standards for the same academic degrees than their

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[17] The metric equivalent to this statement would be to say that the church is 'a kilometre wide and a centimetre deep'.

western counterparts.[18] Even worship services often appeal to the more physical part of man's nature than the deeper spiritual part.

It is unfair to demand that the young African church exhibit all the marks of maturity that a much older and more experienced church would demonstrate. However, it is appropriate to warn that the Church in Africa must not become satisfied with the large numbers and spontaneous enthusiasm and genuine commitment and thus relax in its attempts to grow and develop. The African Church in the twenty-first century must continue to learn and grow. It must resist mediocrity with the same commitment that it resists compromise.

Enthusiasm without Fanaticism

As indicated above, the church is becoming more 'African' and more 'Pentecostal' which implies a greater stress on physical and emotional expressions and also a greater stress on phenomena. In fact, in many African churches today a service is not complete without a few prophecies, a healing or two, and a few demons cast out. Churches and ministries now compete with one another to come up with the most dramatic advertisements such as 'Divine Explosion,' 'Mountain of Miracles,' 'Supernatural Sensation' and similar expressions. Even the names of churches have to reflect this great emphasis on the supernatural with such names as 'Miracle Centre' and 'The Synagogue of the Supernatural'.

It is good to further develop an African flavour in the church, and it is good to preserve the enthusiasm and it is even good to stress the supernatural. However, miracles did not occur every day

[18] For example, many of the PhD dissertations in Africa focus on comparative studies between some Biblical concept and the corresponding concept in an African ethnic group. Whereas this is a legitimate study, it borders more on sociology than theology. However, degrees in Biblical studies are awarded for this kind of research. Too many of the advanced degrees in Africa have only limited regional value and do not measure up to international standards for similar degrees.

in the Bible.[19] Jesus lived for thirty years before ever performing a miracle. To build the church in Africa around the miraculous will lead to at least two problems. First, it will lead to a wrong emphasis. The commission of Jesus was to preach the gospel not to perform miracles. Even in Jesus' own ministry he worried about miracles diverting attention away from his real purpose for coming to this world. He often performed miracles in secret to avoid detracting attention from his teachings. Second, the overstress on miracles will lead to hypocrisy. If miracles are expected in every service, then "miracles" will take place every Sunday. However, these will be manipulated miracles, not the kind of miracles which Jesus performed.

The leaders of the Church in Africa must not yield to the temptation of expecting the miraculous in every service. To do so will lead to fanaticism and deviation from the truth.

Education without Rationalism

The education of the church is steadily improving in Africa. The Accrediting Council of Theological Educators in Africa (ACTEA) estimates that there are presently over two hundred Bible colleges and seminaries in Nigeria alone.[20] Many of the universities and most of the colleges of education have departments of religious studies which teach Christian studies. The academic study of Christianity is very much a part of the academic community in Africa.

One of the problems faced by African Christianity is the danger of being influenced by anti-supernatural rationalism like the western church has been. Starting with the 'Age of Reason', the western Church has gradually been more and more influenced by an anti-supernatural bias which arises from rationalism. This has

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[19] A careful study of the miracles in the Bible will reflect that there were 'seasons' of miracles. In other words, there were times throughout the Biblical history when miracles were being performed but there were other long periods of times when they were uncommon.

[20] This estimate is based upon a private conversation with the accreditation secretary of ACTEA, Dr. Scott Cunningham.

turned much of Christianity in the western world into a moral fraternity or an association of like-minded people who come together for fellowship. The Bible is often viewed as little more than a miscellaneous collection of religious meditations by pious men of the past. The Bible is primarily useful in showing the history and development of religion and has only limited value in the life of the modern world.

Africa does not have the problem with the anti-supernatural bias that is part of the western world. The African worldview presupposes the existence of God and His involvement in the lives of his people. Nearly all Africans accept the existence of the spiritual world and recognise the need to express their religious feelings. Unfortunately, as more Africans study in western institutions and read western theology books, they are becoming more and more influenced by this western anti-supernatural bias. It would be a mistake for the African church in the twenty-first century to loose or weaken its very strong belief in the spiritual world and in the supernatural.

This means that the African church must work harder at not only creating more theological institutions but developing an educated clergy and academic class who not only are committed to worship and service of God but are committed to the historic orthodox tenants of the faith. African leaders and scholars must refuse to yield to the pressure from the west to abandon their traditional beliefs in the supernatural.

Contextualization without Syncretism

Contextualization was a popular word in missiology twenty years ago. The word refers to the process of applying biblical principles to a particular cultural context. Biblical principles are unchanging. However, the application of those principles vary from culture to culture. For example, the Bible teaches children to honour their parents (Exodus 20:12). Regardless of what culture a person lives in, it is expected that he or she will demonstrate appropriate honour and respect for his or her parents. However, the application of this principle varies from culture to culture. In America to honour parents means to be polite to them and to obey them. In Africa it

means that but it also means that one bows appropriately to them. In Yoruba culture, respecting parents means that one prostrates before them. The principle is the same; the application is different.

Contextualization includes many different aspects of church life, including the style of worship services, kinds of church government, methods of evangelism and various lifestyle issues. In some cultures, drinking any kind of alcohol would be totally wrong whereas other cultures allow for the moderate drinking of alcohol. In Africa it is appropriate and even required in some churches for women to wear head coverings when they go to church, whereas in western culture this practice has been almost totally abandoned.

The revival of African culture in the church which has allowed traditional African instruments to be used is positive. However, there are also dangers associated with it. Many of the African independent churches have imported into the church such 'African' practices as polygamy and an overstress on visions and dreams. Other churches have given to angels the same status as the spirits who were the intermediaries between mankind and God. The recent militant attitude toward Muslims during religious crises in Northern Nigeria reflects more of a tribal warfare mentality than the non-violent teachings of Jesus. The African church must resist the temptation to go back so far to their roots that they abandon the principles of Christianity.

Majority Status without Domination

Christianity has either already become the majority religion in Africa or will achieve that status in the early part of the twenty-first century. One of the unfortunate tendencies within Christianity throughout church history is that whenever Christianity has achieved the majority status within a culture, it has become intolerant and sometimes abusive to other religions.[21]

The tribal and ethnic culture in Africa which encourages loyalty to one's own people and makes one suspicious of others has a

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[21] The period of the crusades is one of the low points of Christianity. The church sought through military means to spread or at least defend Christianity by destroying the church's enemies.

tendency to project that mentality into the church. In many parts of Africa, the Church has suffered under the domination of another religion. There are hundreds of testimonies in Northern Nigeria, the Sudan and other parts of Africa of Christians who have been persecuted, abused, and discriminated against simply because of their Christian faith.

The African Church in the twenty-first century must remember that religion is a voluntary thing. To violate the rights of others to express their worship as they choose is a violation of the very basic essence of Christianity. No one should ever be forced to become a Christian. Whenever Christians reach positions of authority in government and education and business, they must exercise the greatest discipline in making sure that the civil and religious rights of minority religions are protected. To do otherwise, is to turn Christianity into a "strong man" religion and to undermine the core teachings of Christianity. The fine line between evangelism and tolerance of other religions has been a tightrope which Christians have not always walked very well.

OPPORTUNITIES OF THE AFRICAN CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Not only will there be many challenges to the African church in the twenty-first century, there will also be many new opportunities. The following are a sampling.

The Most Christian Continent of the 21st Century

There is abundant evidence that Christianity is weakening in the Western World.[22] In addition, there is just as much evidence that

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[22] This statement must be clarified. In some ways the church is stronger than ever. It has grown in conscience. It has awakened to its responsibilities to oppose ethnic and race and sex discrimination. It has awakened to its responsibilities toward the environment. Though it has grown somewhat self-centred, there are still remarkable examples of commitment toward world missions. The church is weakening in the sense that its numbers are decreasing and it is having less and less impact in the

the church in developing countries is growing rapidly. Some observers are projecting a gradual shift of the centre of Christianity from the west to the third world. As Christianity looses ground in Europe and America it is gaining ground in Africa and South America and other developing countries.

I believe that it is very likely that during the twenty-first century, the centre of Christian thought and activity will shift to the third world. The average Christian is going to become increasingly darker in complexion during the next century. The typical church building is likely to be much more simple than the cathedrals in Europe. The style of worship is going to be more a reflection of the people in developing countries than that of Europe and America. The names of Christian leaders in the future will sound more like Luis Palau and Desmond Tutu than Billy Graham and John Stott. With the current growth tendencies in Africa, when people around the world think about Christianity in the future, they will likely think of Africa.

World Leadership of Christianity

If the centre of Christianity shifts from the western world to developing countries, that means that the leadership of church is going to shift from the western world to the third world.[23] This has already been demonstrated to some extent during the last two decades of the twentieth century. For example a major congress on evangelism took place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. However, the last three such congresses have taken place in the Philippines, Korea and South Africa.[24] This suggests that the world leadership

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society as a whole. The rise of abortion rights in the western world is a case in point.

[23] A similar tendency is being observed in the leadership of the United Nations. Although that international body is still dominated somewhat by Western countries, the last two general secretaries have come from developing countries including Betros Betros Gali and Kofi Anan.

[24] At the Global Council on World Evangelism held in Pretoria, South Africa in 1997, over 4000 delegates from all over the world were present. The majority of them were from non-western nations and a large

of Christianity is already shifting away from the west into the rest of the world.

The world leadership of Christianity is going to become a major responsibility of the African church. Leadership is always difficult. The African church must arise to the occasion and prepare herself not only to complete the task of evangelising the rest of Africa but take upon herself the task of leading the rest of the Body of Christ through the twenty-first century.

Holistic Christianity

Christianity made remarkable progress in Africa in the twentieth century. The missionaries who were in Africa planting the church at the beginning of the twentieth century would be very happy with where the African church is today. However, as observed earlier, the church still has a long way to go before the basic principles of Christianity are firmly ingrained in the African Christian church.

One of the growing convictions of the church around the world is that Christianity must be understood as a holistic religion. Christianity is not just what one does on Sunday or what he or she does in his or her own private devotional life. Our Christianity must permeate every part of our lives and must penetrate every part of society. One of the greatest challenges to the African church in the twenty-first century is to recognise and implement this truth. The following are some of the most important principles that must be developed and inculcated into society.

1. *Emphasis on Justice*

One of the fundamental concepts of both Christianity and Judaism is the justice of God. The Psalmist declared, 'The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed' (Psalm 103:6; See also Zephaniah 3:5.). Jesus declared, 'By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgement is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me'. The Apostle Paul

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percentage of the speakers and leaders were also from non-western countries.

declared, 'Now we know that God's judgement against those who do such things is based on truth'.

Justice is a theme that must receive more emphasis in the African church during the twenty-first century. A society can not be healthy without justice. A society will not be just unless justice is imbedded in its core values. The only way that a truth can become a core part of the society is through its religion. Therefore, the African Church must arise to the challenge and preach and teach and practice justice.

In 1995 a group of Nigerian leaders became concerned about the injustice and corruption in the Nigerian society. This led to the Congress on Christian Ethics in Nigeria (COCEN) which took place in Abuja in November 1997. The leaders of this movement stressed that it was not only Muslims and other non-Christians who were participating in the injustice that is part of Nigeria's society. Many Christians are practising such things also. Therefore it became necessary for Christian leaders to study this problem and make some practical suggestions about how to deal with it. This Congress produced the Nigeria Covenant which is a ten-paragraph statement about the ethical beliefs and practices of Nigerian Christians. The sixth paragraph in the covenant says,

> We believe that without justice, there can be no peace in any human society. Therefore, we pledge to be just in all our dealings with others and to resist all forms of injustice and corruption in society including giving or receiving bribes of money, positions, material possessions, sexual favours or intangible assets. We will also resist any form of injustice or unfairness in the law enforcement or judicial systems. We further pledge to discourage others we see practising such things.[25]

It is unfortunate that in some instances the churches and denominations of Nigeria are a reflection of the Nigerian society as a whole. Bribery, extortion, nepotism, tribalism and even outright stealing have characterised many Christian groups. Some of this injustice arises from rank hypocrisy. The leaders know what they

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[25] *Nigeria Covenant*, published by Congress on Christian Ethics in Nigeria, Owerri, Nigeria, p. 5.

are doing but are so pressured by their peers to be successful, they yield to the temptation. On the other hand, there are many people who do not fully understand the ethical teachings of Christianity. They practice injustice out of ignorance. Therefore, they must be taught.

The African church in the twenty-first century must build upon the foundation which has been laid in the last decade of the twentieth century to promote the ethics of Christianity. Serious attention must be given to the study of ethics and holiness so that Christian principles might be properly contextualized for Africa. These principles must be taught at all levels to the body of Christ. And most seriously, church leaders must insist that these principles become incorporated into the lives of the churches' leaders and laymen alike. Injustice will continue in Africa in the twenty-first century. However, injustice in the church must stop.

2. *Respect for Individual Human Rights*

Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'". Because man is made in the image of God, he is entitled to certain rights, often called 'human rights'. In the contemporary world, these rights have been understood as meaning that a man has the right to believe whatever he wants, to worship whatever God he accepts, to live wherever he chooses, to have equal opportunities toward education, jobs, political offices and other privileges. True Christianity supports these fundamental moral rights.

The black church in South Africa has led the way in its opposition to apartheid laws which have discriminated against people on the basis of their race. The last decade of the twentieth century saw great progress in the war against racial discrimination. However, the rest of Africa must follow the lead of their South African brothers in fighting the equally evil practice of ethnicity. Refusing to grant a person a job because he or she is from the wrong ethnic group is a violation of that person's fundamental human rights. Locking a person in prison because he has a different political ideology is a violation of man's basic human rights. Refusing to allow a person to own property or build a house in a

certain area because he or she belongs to another religion is a violation of that person's basic human rights. Refusing to appoint a qualified person to a position of responsibility because she is a woman is a violation of her basic human rights. These types of social problems should be viewed as immoral and inconsistent with a culture based upon Christian principles. They must be addressed clearly and firmly by the African church of the twenty-first century.

3. Assistance to the Needy

One of the clearest teachings and examples of Jesus was related to compassion for the poor.[26] It must be viewed as a fundamental responsibility of every culture to take care of its weak and needy members. This must be learned by the young people in the society just as certainly as they learn that it is wrong to steal things from others.

The application of this principle can take many different forms. Of course, the most obvious application is simply providing assistance for those who are most needy in society. However, Christians must not satisfy their consciences by giving a little money to a poor person. Christianity must be involved in identifying the causes of poverty and addressing these problems. God has not called all Christians to be rich. However, he has called us to help meet the needs of the poor. Helping the needy acquire

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[26] The Old Testament Law states in Exodus 23:11, 'During the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it'. The Psalmist declared, 'Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in time of trouble'. The Wisdom Literature teaches the same truth. 'He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done' (Proverbs 19:17). The New Testament continues the same theme of caring for the needy within the society. Jesus said to the rich young ruler, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me' (Matthew 19:21). Paul declared that during his first visit to Jerusalem, the Christian brothers there accepted him. He then says, 'All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do' (Galatians 2:10).

adequate housing is not just a governmental responsibility but a responsibility of the church. Providing good water for a community is another important application of taking care of the poor and needy. Providing job training and encouraging Christian businessmen so that they can provide honourable jobs for people is a part of our Christian responsibility. The African church in the twenty-first century must understand that the church has to do far more than just sponsoring worship services and conducting funerals and weddings. It must be very much involved in identifying and meeting the needs of the society.

4. *Preservation of the Environment*

The very first instruction man ever received from God was 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground' (Genesis 1:28). The implication of this passage is that man was made the custodian of God's creation. As such God expected man to preserve the world in the same pristine condition in which he received it.[27]

Unfortunately, due to the sin of mankind, our earth has been abused and has gradually become old and worn. And nowhere has the earth received more abuse than in Africa. Farming has depleted the soil. Hunters have annihilated many species of animals. Loggers have destroyed many of the beautiful forests. Miners have left the earth scarred and ugly. Waste from cities has polluted the rivers and oceans. Plastic bags which are carelessly thrown away have made the streets and public places of Africa ugly and defiled.

The African church in the twentieth century has almost totally ignored its responsibility of being the caretaker of the world.

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[27] As an illustration of the way that man should care for the world, God built into the agricultural practices of the Old Testament opportunities for the land to lie idle one year in every seven so that the soil could be replenished (Exodus 23:11, Leviticus 25:1-7, Nehemiah 10:30). When Jesus performed the feeding of the five thousand, Matthew particularly points out that Jesus required the disciples to pick up the left-overs (Matthew 14:20).

Christians are as guilty of abusing the environment as non-Christians. The Nigeria Covenant makes this observation in its commentary of Paragraph Seven 'Public and Church Property',

> The whole earth is jointly owned by all the peoples of the earth. Therefore, resources which are jointly shared by others must be carefully preserved and protected so as to maximize their usefulness and to insure their distribution as equally as possible. For example, all people must breathe the same air. Therefore, it is wrong for one person to pollute the air that thousands of others must breathe. . . To protect the purity and safety of water for the whole community, rivers and other water sources must not be contaminated. The unnecessary destruction of tropical rain forests, the wanton killing of endangered wildlife, and are further examples of poor stewardship.[28]

The church in the twenty-first century must raise its voice to its members and the rest of the society that we have only one world and that God expects us to take care of it. Christian leaders must teach that the world and everything in it belongs to God and that man is merely the caretaker. The church of the next century will have to encourage its government to institute laws that will prohibit further destruction of our environment. The church must teach its children the sacred God-given responsibility they have to preserve the world God has given to us. The proper care of our environment must be viewed as a fundamental moral responsibility.

CONCLUSION

The twenty-first century will be a time of excitement for the African church as it continues to grow and begins to assume a major role of leadership for Christianity as a whole. The twenty-first century will be a time of testing for the African church. Will it measure up to the expectations and responsibilities given to it? The twenty-first century will be a time of work for the African church. To accomplish all that needs to be done will require tireless and sacrificial effort. The twenty-first century will be a time of joy and

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[28] *Nigeria Covenant, Commentary* on Paragraph 7; p. 15.

celebration for the African church because the African church of the twenty-first century will have the opportunity of demonstrating to the world that Jesus' promise to build his Church has been "fulfilled" in one part of the world.

PIONEER CONVERTS IN EAST AFRICA, 1848-1862

Watson A.O. Omulokoli

Having read in the previous article the prognosis of the Christian church in Africa for the 21st century, it is astonishing to be reminded by Professor Watson Omulokoli of the struggles experienced in winning the first few Christian converts in East Africa. It was on 24th November 1850, just 150 years ago, that the first Christian convert of Johann Ludwig Krapf, the pioneer missionary in East Africa, was baptised. John Mringe, a cripple whose body was wasting away with some type of cancer in his bones, was baptised just weeks before his own death. But from that first-fruit has come a glorious harvest to the praise of God.

In this article Omulokoli has performed a real service by engaging in original research, employing primary sources that are difficult to find on the East African scene because they are primary and rare.

The earliest Christian converts in East Africa embraced the Christian faith in the years 1849-1862. The net result was that from a time when there were no indigenous Christians in the region in

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the 1840's, the situation changed so that by mid-1860s, there was a nucleus of converts who had been duly initiated and forged into an existing Christian community.

This stage was reached as one of the key achievements of the pioneer missionary endeavours in East Africa by three German Lutherans, who served under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society (CMS),[1] an Anglican Church missionary agency from Britain. The three served in East Africa for varying lengths of time from 1844 to 1875. The first, Johann Ludwig Krapf initiated the work in 1844 and left the region in 1853. The second, Johann Rebmann was in the field in the years 1846-1875, in a prolonged tenure which was characterised by much patience and persistence. The third, James Erhardt was in East Africa for the brief period of 1849-1855, teaming up with Krapf and Rebmann in the efforts which they had embarked upon earlier. Through their conjoined endeavours, they registered various accomplishments in their missionary thrust. The establishment, over a prolonged period of time, of a nucleus of Christians who had embraced Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, was one of the outstanding achievements of the missionary labours of these three German Lutherans.

Hopeful Prospects in the First Convert

In the early years, the prospects of success did not seem to be bright. When reviewing the year 1847, Krapf was disappointed with the people's response to their missionary efforts. He came to the conclusion that it was only through Godly patience that they would be able to experience encouraging results. This was the spirit behind the words he wrote then to the effect that,

> We will seek comfort in the promise that His Word, wherever it is preached, shall never come back empty; and so we look forward with

[1] Eugene Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society: Its Environment, Its Men and Its Work*, Vol. I (London: Church Missionary Society, 1899), 68. Formed on 12th April, 1799 by Evangelicals within the Church of England, but with most of the early missionary recruits from like-minded Pietistic seminaries in Berlin and Basle, Germany.

> courage and confidence to continue in the new year the work which we have begun, casting the bread of life upon the waters, hoping still to find it again after many days![2]

Little did Krapf realise when he wrote these words that the first signs of hope were around the corner. From the beginning, the CMS missionaries had preached the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. For a long time, their message did not seem to meet with any positive individual response. At last, in May, 1848, Krapf made contact with one person who showed keen personal interest in the message of salvation in Jesus Christ which the missionaries were preaching.[3] This man, Mringe, was a cripple or a person with physical disability, and whose body was wasting away with some type of cancer of the bones.

Although Krapf viewed this contact with Mringe with cautious optimism he was nonetheless encouraged that he had established a personal relationship with one who could turn out to be the pioneer follower of Jesus Christ in East Africa. Looking at the present situation with anticipation for the future, he explained,

> I sometimes think that there will soon he a change among these people, though I am so often disappointed in this anticipation for I seem but to sow the seed upon stony places; yet have I joy in hope, hope in believing, and work on with trust; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord to the best of my ability, and patiently waiting His own time for the blessing![4]

Once Krapf made contact with Mringe, the two established rapport which they went on to cultivate as they met frequently in subsequent days. Mringe became consistent in visiting Krapf and discussing spiritual issues with him. In turn, Krapf took a keen interest in Mringe and even tried to assist him materially in order

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2 [John] Lewis Krapf for Johann Ludwig Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*. Second Edition with a New Introduction by Roy C. Bridges (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968), 86.

3 *Ibid.*, 193.

4 *Ibid.*, 195.

to help improve his physical and social well-being. In keeping with their constant contact, Krapf mentions Mringe often in his writings in this period. In one instance on 27th November, 1848, Krapf wrote, 'I read and prayed with Mringe, who seems to be under the influence of God's preparing grace'.[5] With the passage of time, Mringe also became intimate with Rebmann. This acquaintanceship proved to be valuable and was strengthened in the period of 12th July to 1st November, 1848, when Krapf was away in Usambara. It was now Rebmann who maintained contact with Mringe and who tried to assist him in his Christian faith. As Mringe grew and matured in his Christian commitment others around him were encouraged in their search and wanted to follow in his footsteps.

In this early period of Mringe's interest in Christian matters, one of his neighbours, Ndune or Abbe Munga seemed to be responsive to Christian teaching. Although he was not as consistent and persistent as Mringe, and wavered after a while, his very interest indicated that there was potential for more converts in the near future. Indeed, this very point was made to Mringe by the community elders and leaders of the area. In the first instance, they allowed Mringe to embrace Christianity, if that was his desire and choice. Secondly, they indicated that what the Wanyika (Mjikenda people) were waiting for was for pioneers who would lead the way in following Jesus Christ. As soon as this barrier was broken by a nucleus, many more people would follow that lead and commit themselves to Jesus Christ. At that time, Krapf went on to urge Mringe and his friend Ndune or Abbe Munga to take up the challenge by becoming the envisaged vanguard,[6] "since it were a great honour to them in heaven to be the first fruits, and adopting the way of Jesus Christ'.[7]

As it turned out, while Ndune or Abbe Munga seemed to have slowed down in his commitment, Mringe maintained his determination to follow Jesus Christ, and in the process became the

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5 *Church Missionary Gleaner*, n.s. 1 (1850-1851), 113.

6 Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, 203.

7 *Church Missionary Gleaner*, n.s. 1 (1850-1851), 114.

beacon that could guide others who were ready to embrace the Christian faith. His example may have given the missionaries a flicker of hope that all was not in vain, and that others would follow his example in the near future. As Krapf reported on the situation at the end of 1849,

> After my return from Ukambani I continued for a few weeks, as formerly, my daily wanderings among the Wanyika in the neighbourhood of Rabai, preaching the Gospel, and bidding all to the feast prepared, even the kingdom of Heaven scattering the seed, not disheartened though so little had fallen upon good ground, and in Mringe alone has sprung up with a promise of bearing fruit an hundred-fold, hopeful and trustful to the end.[8]

Baptism and Death of Mringe

Mringe had become the symbol of success and hope in the work of the CMS in East Africa. Then, while Krapf was away in Europe in 1850, this lone convert became ill and eventually died, but after being baptised by Rebmann. The facts are that he was baptised on 24th November, 1850, and died on 3rd December. Prior to his baptism, Rebmann and Erhardt discussed his case and agreed that, because it was clear that he was likely to die, and since he was sure about his Christian conviction and profession, arrangements should be made for him to be baptised. With that agreed upon, the day for his baptism was fixed as Sunday, 24th November, with John or Johannesi as his baptismal name.

First, Rebmann prepared him by going through the content of the Baptismal Service with him twice. Secondly, the step which Mringe was taking in becoming a Christian was explained and emphasised to his mother, since he was living with her. On the day of baptism, the ceremony was not held indoors but rather outside Mringe's hut in the open in order to enable others in the community to witness the occasion. Regarding the service itself and the significance of the event, Rebmann wrote,

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[8] Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, 208.

> His baptism... took place, all in the Kinyika language, in the presence of his mother, Abbe Gunja, the Chief and one of the Elders, one of our servants, and a few other Wanyika...He was called Johannesi. Thus the first soul of the thousands and millions of this part of Africa has been translated from the reign of Satan into the Kingdom of Christ, the pledge of the full harvest for which our faith has still to wait, and our love to labour. The Lord's name be praised, who allows even the least and most unworthy of His servants to lead souls to Him, who alone is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. [9]

Following his baptism on 24th November, his health continued to deteriorate, culminating in his death on 3rd December. By the time he died, the conversion and baptism of Mringe were accomplished facts. Whatever else happened, it was now a fact of history that a beginning had been made in the conversion of individuals in East Africa. There is a sense also in which the conversion and death of Mringe had their own significance as pointers to the future of Christianity in the region. When his wife and daughter died and were buried at the beginning of his missionary endeavours, Krapf had explained that since 'the victories of the Church are gained by stepping over the graves of her members', the 'lonely missionary grave' of his family signified the beginnings of Christian efforts in East Africa.[10] Later Krapf had written about his hopes for a breakthrough in the conversion of individuals in the region. As he puts it,

> Meanwhile, I often prayed fervently for the preservation of my life in Africa, at least until one should be saved; for I was certain that if once a single stone of the spiritual temple were laid in any country, the Lord would bless the work, and continue the structure, by the conversion of those who were now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to whom our missionary labours were but as the dawn of the day-star from on High.[11]

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9 *Church Missionary Gleaner*, n.s. 1 (1850-1851), 196.

10 Stock, *History of the CMS*, Vol. 1, 461-462.

11 Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, 157.

Worthy Successor in Abbe Gunja

Mringe had distinguished himself as the first convert in vast Africa. Of the people on whom Mringe's example had a profound impact the most immediate clear response came from one of his nearby neighbours, Abbe Gunja. Before he went on furlough to Europe in April, 1850, Krapf had already made acquaintance with him because of their common association with Mringe.[12] Commenting on Abbe Gunja's introduction to the Christian faith, Rebmann wrote on 21st September, 1850, 'By means of the poor cripple Mringe, another more respectable Mnyika was induced to listen to the Gospel, and to open his heart for its reception'.[13] In contrast to Mringe, who had been subjected to a low social status in his immediate social environment, Abbe Gunja was a family man who was held in high esteem in his community.[14] Underscoring Mringe's role and instrumentality in bringing Abbe Gunja into the Christian fold, Krapf wrote of him, 'He is useful among Wanyika and Wakarnba people. One of the former, a man of some respectability, has applied for instruction'.[15]

When Mringe died, it was obvious that Abbe Gunja replaced and succeeded him as the leading convert of the mission, although he had yet to be baptised.[16] His devotion to Jesus Christ as well as to the mission was notable. As he maintained his instruction under Rebmann's care, his faith deepened to such an extent that it was noted that he had 'given gratifying proofs of a renewed heart'.[17]

Growth in a Period of Interruption

Because of unsettled and unstable conditions which resulted from the death of Sultan Seyyid Said in October, 1856, Rebmann and his wife left the mission station for Zanzibar towards the end of that

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12 *Ibid.*, 211.

13 *Church Missionary Gleaner,* n.s. 1 (1850-1851), 176.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Church Missionary Record,* 22, no. 1 (January 1851), 11.

16 Stock, *History of the CMS,* vol. 2, 133.

17 Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours,* 221.

year. He visited it briefly in November 1858, but did not effectively return to re-occupy it until the early part of 1859.[18] When Rebmann retreated from the station to Zanzibar at the end of 1856, the unbaptised covert, Abbe Gunja, accompanied him there. It seems as if, together with Abbe Gunja, a friend of his, Mua Muamba, who had strong interest in the Christian faith, also went with Rebmann. In April 1858, Abbe Gunja and Mua Muamba returned to the mission station. Abbe Gunja found the community in and around Rabai eagerly longing for the return of Rebmann and the missionary team. Eventually, when Rebmann visited the area on November 22-24, 1858, he met with an enthusiastic welcome on one hand, and astounding results of Christian converts on the other hand. This fact was expressed in a report which stated, 'The Missionary left his station cast down and dispirited. He knew of but one covert, Abbe Gunja, and that one unbaptised. He returns, and finds six won to Christ, and a friendly spirit taking the place of enmity in the hearts of those who are yet untouched by the renewing grace of God'.[19] Apart from Abbe Gunja and Mua Muamba the others in the total group who were recognised by name were Zuia and Dena.[20]

Baptism of Father and Son

Since the baptism of Mringe in 1850, no one else had been baptised. Now the prospects for more baptisms looked bright as Rebmann settled down again in the station in 1859. Just then, however, an incident took place which brought deep sorrow and great disappointment to Rebmann, but also awakened him. This was the sudden death of one of the converts, Mua Muamba, on 30th January, 1860. Rebmann went to his home to take him some medicine on that day, only to find that he had just passed away moments earlier. The encouraging thing in all this was the report which his wife gave about his instructions earlier, and his activities on the day of his death. Although he died prematurely in middle

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18 *Proceedings of the CMS* (1860-1861), 56-57.

19 *Church Missionary Record*, n.s. 4, no. 7 (July 1859), 213-214.

20 *Ibid.*, 214-215.

age, he had already given firm instructions that upon his death, they should not engage in any offending traditional ceremonies since he was a Christian. Then, on the day of his death itself, "in the morning, he had, according to his custom, still knelt down by the side of his miserable bedstead for prayer'.[21]

From the point of view of Rebmann, sadness and sorrow over Mua Muamba's death was mixed with disappointment that although he was a convert, he had died before they baptised him. On the positive side, Rebmann was awakened to the need to begin preparing other converts for baptism, especially Abbe Gunja and his son, Nyondo. The baptism ceremony for the two took place on Pentecost Sunday, in May 1860, with the father taking on the name of Abraham and the sixteen year old son being named Isaac. As Rebmann narrated in his letter of 15th September 1860,

> Having been warned by the unexpected death of Mua Muamba of the uncertainty of life, I felt .... That I could no longer defer the baptism of one, who, as far as his own personal preparation was concerned, might have been baptised years ago. I therefore fixed on the day of Pentecost, which was near, and had then the great privilege of receiving both father and son into the ark of the Church of Christ.[22]

The baptism of Abraham Abbe Gunja and his son, Isaac Nyondo, was a very significant step in the life of the CMS in East Africa. This meant that now, for the first time since the baptism of Mringe ten years earlier, there was a body of baptised Christians in the Mission, in addition to other converts. In later years, Isaac Nyondo progressed to become Rebmann's personal attendant and confidant. Having baptised two of the converts, the four remaining converts, were considered baptismal candidates with whom Rebmann worked in this state for the rest of that year, 1860.

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21 *Proceedings of the CMS* (1860-1861), 57.

22 *Church Missionary Record*, n.s. 6, no. 2 (February 1861), 45.

Easter Sunday Baptism for Four

The turn for baptism of these four came on the Easter Sunday of the following year, 1861. On that particular Sunday, Rebmann expressed how clear to him it was with regard to these four that, 'I felt I must no longer withhold the means of grace with which, as a minister of Christ, I was entrusted'.[23] One of these, Dena, who was named Joseph had been close to Abbe Gunja at a very early stage, but had made slow progress. Two others, Mua Zuia who took on the name of David, and Lugo, who was named Jonathan, had been together through many problems. The fourth, Zuia, was a very respectful and congenial man who took on the name of Johannesi or John. In the same process, Rebmann took the bold step of not limiting, these converts to baptism, but also went ahead and 'admitted them as communicants'.[24]

Building on the Established Foundation

With the foundation having been laid, the building of the actual structure continued, slowly, but steadily and surely. Commendable progress was made not only in terms of numbers but also in the sphere of consistency and commitment to Christian ideals and demands. With regard to numbers Rebmann indicated that in June 1962, there was 'a further increase of about six or seven persons' as new inquirers enrolled to learn about the Christian faith. Among this fresh group was one, Marunga, who seemed to be on the whole 'more thoughtful than others, and as the principal and most intelligent man' in the community.[25] This was a gigantic leap forward from the days of Mringe, with his low social status. In the area of adherence to recurrent Christian practices, a high level of consistency and maturity had been achieved as the individual members of the Christian community flew their respective flags and carried their crosses voluntarily. As Rebmann remarked, 'They come to the station, more or less regularly, on Sundays, to which, under present circumstances when the people are scattered about at

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23 *Proceedings of the CMS* (1861-1862), 56.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Church Missionary Record*, n.s. 6, no. 2 (February 1861), 45.

an inconvenient distance, and when the station, with its requisite buildings, is only now struggling into existence'.[26]

These additions, conversions, and baptisms represented a tremendous accomplishment in the work of the CMS as well as for the cause of Jesus Christ in East Africa. On another level, the additions, conversions, and baptisms heralded a major breakthrough and the beginning of a new process, that of enrolling a community of Christians from the region in God's eternal register. It was now realistic to talk in concrete terms about the indigenisation of the Church, with all that this implied. Among other things, Krapf's dream of 'a black bishop and black clergy' was now an achievable goal.[27] Somehow, it was fitting that God allowed Krapf to witness and rejoice in the encouraging results which were now evident in the mission which he had founded. This took place in a first hand encounter which was afforded him when he visited Rabai in 1862 on his way to settle Methodist missionaries at nearby Ribe. In a jubilant mood, he wrote in his letter of 17th April 1962,

> I afterwards made the acquaintance of these converts and boys, and especially of Abraham Abbe Gunja, whose eyes got luminous when he shook hands again with me, after so long an interval. Most of the converts I knew personally, especially the Mnyika Upanga, whom I have mentioned in the German edition of my book as the most hardened and unapproachable, sinner, for I often called upon him at Rabai Mpya in his sickness, and laboured to lead him to the Saviour of sinners, but to no effect. Witnessing all this, I could not but exclaim, 'What has God wrought in the country by the faith, patience, and perseverance of Mr. Rebmann, his humble servant !'[28]

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26 *Ibid.*, 347.

27 Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, 135.

28 *Church Missionary Record*, n.s. 7, no. 8 (August 1862), 238.

Summary and Conclusion

The three pioneer missionaries, Krapf, Rebmann, and Erhardt did not win large numbers of East Africans to the Christian faith.[29] All the same, through their indefatigable labours, a nucleus of indigenous converts embraced Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Three things seemed to be very clear in this early period. *First*, the people among whom the missionaries were working did not accept the Christian faith readily and with ease. *Secondly*, the missionaries themselves were careful and cautious, avoiding the temptation of trying to hurriedly initiate into the Christian faith those whose commitment to Jesus Christ was not clear. *Thirdly*, it was through the active Christian witness of the indigenous converts themselves that more of their number were won to salvation in Jesus Christ. Through this slow and steady approach, a nucleus of indigenous Christian converts emerged in the years 1848-1862.

From the beginning, these pioneer converts were not viewed in isolation, but rather, as the vanguard of many who would embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord in the region in succeeding generations. It was with this in view, that in the initial stages, Krapf had envisaged a scenario in which 'once a single stone of the spiritual temple were laid in any country, the Lord would bless the work, and continue the structure'.[30]

Similarly when he baptised Mringe, Rebmann saw this as but the first step in a long continuum. As he put it, 'Thus the first soul of the thousands and millions of this part of Africa has been translated from the reign of Satan into the Kingdom of Christ, the pledge of the full harvest for which our faith has still to wait and our love to

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[29] Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1952), 6. Oliver has written, 'These three sad and other-worldly men achieved no great evangelistic success among the scattered and socially incoherent Wanyika tribesmen who were their neighbours at Rabai...But Krapf and Rebmann, if they were somewhat impractical, had vision, tenacity and boundless courage. They were filled with the assurance that others of their calling would follow them, and they regarded themselves from the first as the pioneers of a continental system'.

[30] Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*, 157.

labour'.[31] There is now a thriving Church in East Africa with an innumerable number of Christians. Viewing it retrospectively, it is abundantly clear that the roots of this astounding phenomenon are to be found in Mringe and his colleagues – the pioneer Christian converts in East Africa.

[31] *Church Missionary Gleaner*, n.s. 1 (1850-1851), 196.

STRATEGY FOR REACHING MUSLIMS:
Foundational and Contentious Issues

Anonymous Author

Muslims are among those who are unreached with the gospel, though they are not unreachable. The author, with a rich experience of reaching Muslims, lays down some foundational principles essential for Muslim evangelism, then proceeds to discuss some contentious issues. This is a thought provoking and insightful article on Muslim evangelism worthy of reflection.

Developing a strategy that enables Christians for Muslim evangelism in an area such as East Africa is an enormously complex undertaking. Cultural and sociological settings range from the sophisticated urbanite to the primitive nomad, the *buibui*-covered[1] Swahili woman with strong Arab connections to the teenage model competing in entertainment and show business, the highly intellectual academic or businessman to the humble slum dweller. There are no simple solutions, even less can we expect to find a standard strategy to reach all these peoples. Although specific details will vary greatly, there are however some foundational issues which we must consider first.[2]

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1 A black scarf covering the larger part of the face, generally worn by Arab women along the coast of Kenya.

2 The importance of laying a solid foundation as a point of departure for strategic considerations cannot be stressed too much. Compare Nehls' heavy emphasis on strong foundations in *Premises and Principles of Muslim Evangelism*, where he devotes over 60 pages (10-79) to it.

SOME FOUNDATIONAL ISSUES

Research conducted recently has confirmed our concern for ***the all-importance of right attitudes***. Muslim evangelism that is induced and nourished by fear of Islam or by a spirit of triumphalism is bound to produce negative results. Even an in-depth knowledge of Islamic teAching and practice may be (and too often is!) used in an aggressive and destructive way. Unless the Christian witness wholeheartedly seeKs to understand a Muslim and to share 'the truth in love',[3] this kind of Muslim evangelism will only produce 'bitter fruit'.

We recognise that the enormous diversity of Islamic settings will justify, yes, even demand, an equally ***broad spectrum of ministry approaches.*** In East Africa this is already being practised by many ministries working there. Mission to Muslims by individuals and local churches may provide yet a greater variety of approaches.[4] I think this diversification is in principle a healthy cross-fertilising element as long as it does not infringe on work which is already being done.[5]

It is certainly crucial to develop **carefully tailored *strategies to fit the African context.*** Experimentation with new methods is a vital part of finding ones feet in a given situation. Yet I see the danger that lack of experience may mislead new workers to an uncritical copying of successful methods from other places and countries, or even from a different continent. This will unnecessarily limit or even damage the ministry. Gilchrist gives an example in regard to men witnessing to women. In contrast to

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[3] In reference to Ephesians 4:15 as quoted by Nehls, *A Practical and Tactical Approach*, 37.

[4] Rev. Matheney from the Nairobi Lighthouse church gave a very inspiring report, using the cell group model in their congregation to reach out to Muslims (among others) in the 'most unthreatening environment', namely, the home.

[5] Lamu island might serve as an example: An open air crusade conducted by some outside church may seriously hamper the long-term contacts built up by a residential Christian worker.

Parshall's experience in Bangladesh who never witnessed directly to a Muslim lady. Gilchrist clarifies that,

> In South Africa, however,[6] such restrictions hardly exist. Christian men may freely witness to Muslim women, whether single or married, and...most Muslim men have no objection to this once they realise the Christian has no other motive or objective than the propagation of his faith.[7]

Another decisive factor depends on ***how effectively the evangelical congregations can be mobilised and equipped for the task***. Some ministries have duly acknowledged this and invest considerable resources into training while others are continuing to do their best, yet divorced from the church. I think this is very unfortunate. Even in work among rather hostile groups like the Somalis, missionaries should not underrate the enormous potential of lay people using their natural contacts at work in the neighbourhood. Some ministries such as 'People of God' and 'AIM-FARM' seem to have awakened to the crucial role of training believers within the churches, but how much more could be accomplished if this was pursued more vigorously and by a greater number of ministries to Muslims![8] Reasons for such reluctance to work closely with other Christians in a country like Kenya might lie in a strong denominational commitment that will not give the missionary the liberty to co-operate with Christians of another persuasion. It could also be rooted in a misguided ideal of the 'homogeneous unit approach'[9] to church planting. It may encourage converts from minority ethnic groups to insist that they

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6 From personal experience in Nairobi (and also my wife in regard to Muslim men) we can confirm this is quite accurate, at least in an urban setting.

7 John Gilchrist, *The Christian Witness to the Muslim* (Benoni: Jesus to the Muslims, 1988), 29.

8 I readily acknowledge that this is an uphill struggle and that at times workers may feel they are wasting their time on seeking to train the reluctant, or motivating a pastor. Even so, I believe there is no better way.

9 This refers to the 'homogeneous unit approach' widely promoted by Dr. Donald McGavran from Fuller Theological Seminary during the 70's.

are so different from other Christians of the country that planting ethnically separate Muslim convert churches seems to be the only way.[10]

It will also help us to ***know which factors play a major role for conversions among Muslims to Christ.*** John Miller, formerly based in Mombasa, observed in a survey among Muslim converts in five African countries in 1987,

(1) We must be aware of the importance of our personal influence and maximise the exposure of our lives. Personal influence of foreign missionaries played a major part in the decision making of the converts.
(2) Major emphasis in all our witness and preaching ought to be given to the fact that forgiveness of sins is available in Christ. The desire for forgiveness of sins was a moving factor in a majority of converts' lives.
(3) Christian literature must be utilised to the full. This applies particularly to copies of the Gospels, but reading of other Christian literature, reading of the Old Testament, were all-important factors.
(4) Preaching also has a place, in spite of our current emphasis on personal evangelism to the neglect of public preaching. Although Muslims are reluctant to respond publicly to mass evangelism, it is evident that many have listened to it and been affected by it, and eventually responded to it.
(5) Muslims who are in the process of being educated and Muslims under age of thirty seem to be more open to consider the truth of the gospel than others.[11]

I am also convinced[12] that the ***methods employed must be contemporary and appropriate***. Too many Christians assume that

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[10] In order to avoid misunderstanding, let me clarify that I do not question the validity of outreach to specific groups or special fellowship meetings for Muslim converts. But I do not think we do them any service in encouraging separation from the Body of Christ in a place like Kenya which is offering such a wide choice of different churches.

[11] John Miller, *'Survey of converts from Islam through SIM-related ministry regarding factors that they consider influential in moving them towards response to the gospel'*. Unpublished term paper. An Internship for Dr. John Gration, 1987.

the same old service style, the most ancient translation of the Bible or the same traditional methods will be the most attractive, effective and divinely authenticated ones. We may certainly learn from St. Paul's mission principles, his gospel presentation and spiritual commitment, but times have changed. Our fast-paced, ever changing world demands methods that are fresh and relevant.[13]

After having stated these convictions, let us reflect on some more contentious issues also.

SOME CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

It is not always easy to decide which methods and approaches will work well. Much of it depends on the timing, the setting and the right "dose" we are giving out to others. The prayerful, wise and watchful witness will find the right way. Some potential roadblocks should be considered:

Aggressive methods will invariably cause more harm than good. This seems to be an obvious statement, yet in practice many Christians defy its truth. The crusade mentality marks so much of the typical Christian approach either in public rallies or in the 'anti-*halaal* campaigns' where Christians have been known to collect signatures against the almost exclusive sale of '*halaal* meat'[14] in shops and supermarkets. 'Dumping literature' in large quantities in predominantly Muslim areas has also shown counter-

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12 Along with the late Prof. George W. Peters, who beseeched his students during class lectures in Korntal in 1985: 'Whose missionary methods are we to use, St. Paul's or ours? -- Of course, ours'!

13 The International Bible Society of East Africa set an innovative example by publishing a bilingual New Testament in modern Swahili and Arabic language which is being well received especially among the younger generation.

14 Muslims are only permitted to enjoy meat that has been slaughtered in the typical Islamic way of draining all the blood through cutting the jugular vein. During the process they pronounce the '*bismillah*'. Many Christians feel they need to object to this as 'food sacrificed to an idol' (1 Cor 8).

productive results.[15] The argument that "one soul saved is worth more than any other loss" fails to take into account the damage done to many unknown Muslims who were turned off from considering a gospel message through what they must perceive as an 'act of indecency'.

Christ's servants to Muslims need to gain clarity whether their task should also include to *stem the tide* of Islam. Are we to openly attack the Islamic system or take sides against an Islamic leader like Saddam Hussein, Khomeini or Yasser Arafat? From our historical reflections, both during the colonial era as well as recent events, it is quite clear that this would neither be wise nor necessary.[16] We recognise, however, that we have an urgent responsibility to shield the members in our churches and congregations from Islamic deception by warning them with clarity and urgency what they forfeit by turning their back to Christ and embracing Islam.

Another issue for contention deserves consideration here: Why not ***put all our resources into Muslim background believers*** and enable them to reach their previous co-religionists? On the first sight a lot seems to speak for this: they know the culture, speak the language, and are acquainted with the religious content of their people, much better than any of us ever will.

There is, however, another side to it. This approach conveniently ignores that the former Muslim will be received with far more opposition, contempt and outright hatred than any other witness. After conversion it will usually take a long time before he can freely mix with his family and friends, let alone share the gospel with them. My concern goes a step further. This approach can become a cheap excuse for many a Christian to discharge

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[15] Parshall recalls a direct mailing campaign of Urdu New Testaments to all telephone subscribers in an Islamic country in Asia. Hundreds of these were refused and returned to the post office eventually ending up as waste paper "The Muslim could only shake his head in disbelief that such a desecration of Scripture could take place". *Ibid.*, 130.

[16] Neither is the Christian witness obliged to justify every action of the state of Israel towards the Palestinians on the grounds that 'they are God's chosen people'.

himself of his responsibility and put it all into the court of the brother from an Islamic background. On the positive side, expatriate missionaries will do well to closely listen to Christians from a Muslim background, especially in the area of assisting Muslim seekers or young believers in their quest for following Christ. In several ministries former Muslims actually play an important supportive role.[17]

Our openness for experimentation needs to be kept in balance. Most of us are inclined to stick to acquired habits and continue in our familiar tracks.[18] Missionaries are not exempted here. It has been said and not without reason, that 'missionaries are people who are willing to sacrifice everything, even their lives, but not their (ingrained, and at times, wrong) convictions'.[19] Parshall in his 'trail-blazer book', *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* underscores the importance of the missionaries' readiness for change,

> My conviction is that we as missionaries must open ourselves to criticism, both from friend and foe. We must be willing to re-evaluate what has come to be regarded as sacrosanct methodology. 'Change' must not be a dreaded word. Can the missionary to Islam be more effective? What is the Muslim's perception of the missionary? How can it be changed for the better?[20]

He strongly advocates for experimentation in methodology 'to move away from techniques that have proved barren',[21] 'to narrow the distance between Islam and Christianity',[22] and 'to avoid frustration among young missionaries'.[23] Indeed, it would be

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17 Interestingly, in Kenya very few former Muslims are in direct leadership positions in ministries to Muslims. This is different in Ghana, Nigeria and various francophone countries.

18 A German idiom puts it neatly, '*Der Mensch ist ein Gewohnheitstier*'.

19 Lecture given by Fred Nel, an alumnus of 'Haggai Advanced Leadership Training Institute' in Singapore.

20 Phil Pharshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 3rd printing, 98.

21 *Ibid.*, 17.

22 *Ibid.*, 147.

23 *Ibid.*, 119.

foolish not to heed such advice, for as much as God is in the business of changing his servants to conform closer to his image, so our methods and approaches should also reflect that inner change to a large extent.

But there are important limitations to balance one's zeal for experimentation with a respect for one's colleagues, especially when working in a closely knit team. There is need for a thorough, sober reflection considering the long-term implications of a new method and a theological integrity to the nature of the gospel, especially in the area of contextualization.[24]

Cultural sensitivity and contextualization have become the missionary watchwords of our day. Whereas many missionary prayer letters during the colonial era may have promoted an air of paternalism and nationalistic superiority over the 'primitive pagan people', the pendulum has now swung far towards the other side. Georges Houssney believes that,

> This fear of tampering with culture is one of the most inhibiting factors in reaching Muslims. In an extreme case, a veteran missionary to a Muslim country adamantly told me that she would not give a Bible to a Muslim because it would offend him.[25]

Suggestions to 'try by every possible way to become like Muslims' in order to 'present the gospel in religious and cultural forms that Muslims can identify with'[26] carry the potential danger of denying the power of the gospel. I am afraid that general statements like, 'missionaries should use certain passages from the Quran as a springboard for explaining the gospel'[27] carry the danger of neglecting a sensitive probing and understanding where the Muslim inquirer stands.

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[24] This is not to say that Parshall would disagree with any of these concerns.

[25] Georges Houssney, 'Methodological Roadblocks' in *Reach Out*, Vol. 8, No. 2 & 3, 1996, 12.

[26] John Mark Terry, 'Approaches to the Evangelisation of Muslims', *EMQ*, April 1996, 172.

[27] *Ibid.*, 173.

The question of ***confrontation and dialogue*** is the last one we will consider. My impression is that convictions in this matter are primarily affected by personality and personal experiences, rather than by doctrinal positions, probably more than some of us would like to admit. I would also hasten to add that interpretations of these terms differ widely, so it is always good to listen to the other's definition of terms before passing judgement. If dialogue means 'a sincere effort...to achieve mutual understanding...and to promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values',[28] hardly anyone would object. But where it is translated into public prayers jointly performed by the leading representatives of the respective religious community, it is bound to lead to much confusion or frustration among ordinary church members and will prove counterproductive to an effective evangelistic witness. Interestingly, even Muslims, like Dr. Kateregga feel that dialogue certainly works for the advantage of the Muslim side, since 'in most cases, Christians who participate in dialogue have, at best, only half-baked ideas about Islam, normally derived from the Orientalist sources'.[29] One wonders whether a straightforward grass-root level approach like a small mobile Christian book-shop used at a ferry, as done in Mombasa a few years ago, might not produce better results.[30]

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[28] Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on relations between the Church and non-Christian religions, chapter 3 from Jacques Jomier, *How to Understand Islam* (London: SCM Press, 1989), 132.

[29] Badru Kateregga, 'The Islamic Da'wah – How to carry it to Christians', *Al Islam*, June 1983, 20.

[30] For a practical example of this approach, see Gary Robert Morgan, *Unreached, but not Unreachable*, 45.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN OUR CHURCHES

LOIS SEMENYE

Evangelism is only the first step in fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. 'Making disciples' includes both evangelism and teaching. The role of evangelism is the focus of two articles in this issue. But churches will remain weak if they neglect the second aspect of 'making disciples' which is teaching. In order for the church in Africa to grow stronger and deeper in the 21st century, she must not only engage in evangelism of the lost, but she must also teach the converts so that they may grow and mature, becoming fruitful and reproductive Christians.

Dr. Lois Semenye shows the way how churches can make a difference through Christian Education. Theological institutions must train future pastors and church leaders to be mindful of the necessity of effective teaching in the local churches.

Christians have been called to mature in Christ and become holy; 1 Peter 1: 15-16, 'Be holy, because I am holy'. This holy living should be reflected in the believer's life, a life that demonstrates Christ-like character. The Christ-like Christian is called upon to

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impact the society with biblical principles. Matthew 5:13 refers to Christians as the salt and light of the world. In other words, where Christians are, there must be a domino reaction. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

A quick review of church growth studies has shown that the growth of Christianity in the continent of Africa is unprecedented. Unfortunately, despite the number of Christians in Africa, the continent is perpetually experiencing coups, corruption, tribalism and immorality just to mention a few of the vices. In countries where ethnic wars are destroying thousands of people like Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia and Congo, it is not surprising to note that those who cause the misery are also Christians.

The fundamental questions that need to be addressed are: What has gone wrong? Has the Word of God lost its power? Is there something wrong in the way we teach biblical principles? Christians have developed ways of teaching the Word of God throughout the years.

For example, in Africa, formal education was brought to us by the missionaries. Indeed, education was an integral part of the missionary movement. However, this education has been criticised. As early as 1919, Allen (1919) observed that the education given to Christian converts was not proper because it did not meet the needs of the people. Later on, an African Evangelist was quoted saying, 'I am concerned that unless we find ways of discipling and instructing the new Christians we might be in danger. We have a large body of interested people who call themselves Christians, but who have not been taught' (Coon 1983: 24).

Learning biblical truth does not necessarily take part in a given Sunday school class, Bible study group or even in preaching. The lack of proper teaching or discipling Christians has resulted in distorted perception of the Word of God. This calls for reformulating the educational system in our churches. Consequently, this will affect how our theological schools ought to train Christian leaders to disciple believers to Christian maturity.

Different churches have different methods of teaching their believers. Some of these methods include catechetical where one is taught to recite questions and answers. Unfortunately, this method

does not always allow reflective thinking. Another method is simply teaching a Bible story to all age groups who are in the same class and treating them alike and expect them to learn. Worse still, is when a teacher reads long passages of the Bible and expects the students to pay attention and learn without much explanation or defining the difficult terms. Or a preacher expounding on a passage without an objective of what the congregation should take to heart. Still another is when a teacher who is not prepared to teach a lesson comes and keeps the children busy by singing songs that are theologically unsound.

These and other inadequate methods are not only limited to children's classes, but in adult Bible studies also. A Bible study teacher or Sunday School teacher should not preach but instruct the participants. Moreover, in many cases, the 'preaching' is meant to condemn the listeners instead of building them up. Other teachers emphasise on adhering to regulations of do's and don'ts. This type of teaching has resulted in creating superficial Christians, causing a lack of proper knowledge of God. According to Mbiti (1970), the superficial Christians are as a result of improper instruction about the Word of God. This was also emphasized by Joy (1976), who stated that the missionaries, "who traversed land and sea to make one more proselyte succeeded only in making the proselyte doubly sure of hell. The proselyte always comes in by the short cut – he is given 'instant language', he imitates kosher experiences and behaviour, and turns out to have a distorted perception about the more subtle beliefs and values" (Joy 1976:24). This teaching continues even today. There are many street preachers who engage in condemning passers-by instead of building them up. What is solid teaching in many instances is lacking.

These subtle beliefs and values are clearly demonstrated in our many cultures, especially during funerals, political forums, marriage ceremonies and at the time of illness, just to mention a few. During these forums, people turn to 'traditional' ways of life. Some go to seek the witch-doctors and the soothsayers, instead of the Bible. Therefore, the questions that we Christian teachers and theologians need to address are what and how we should teach Christian education that will result in changing of lives.

Christian education must seek to impart relevant Christian truth in order to influence society more positively, and to bring learners into a right relationship with God and with their fellow citizens. To do this, Christian education practitioners need to rediscover how to apply relevant theology which will bridge the gap between content and method, and setting a background which will enhance the propagating of Christian truth by using the best methods and content.

Randolph Crump Miller in Gibbs' book (1992) emphasised that we should not teach in abstracts. He wrote, "we are dealing with real children and real adults, and theology is simply 'a truth-about-God-in-relation-to-man'. As adults, we should have mature beliefs, but we should teach these beliefs in terms of the experiences and capacities of the children and older learners, leading them always from their 'growing edge' to deeper meanings and appreciation of life. The chief source of all our teaching is the Bible, the chief interest of our teaching is the learner and the chief end of our teaching is God and Father of Jesus Christ" (Gibbs 1992:268).

George Albert Coe in Gibbs' book (1992), stated that 'religion changes in the act of teaching it' (Gibbs 1992:248). This implies that the teacher and the learner are crucial components in Christian education. The teacher acts as a representative of the Church or for God and for a cause of a curriculum, while the learner represents nobody else except himself or herself. I suggest we consider these two components briefly.

Teacher

The teacher is a messenger or a transmitter by his or her own conviction and voluntary loyalty. The conviction and loyalty adds impressiveness and authority to the message communicated. It can either be concrete and warm to the pupil listening or it can be the opposite. A Christian teacher should be one who follows the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ and views the learners as people who have the possibility of becoming one with God in their rightful privilege in relating to creation. Hence, the teacher has a commitment to guide each learner in his or her own search for a complete and truly meaningful life. A Christian teacher should

therefore make such big impressions on a learner's life, for example shaping their goals, values and desires to mention a few. In order for this to happen, a Christian teacher must play many roles (Semenye, 1995).

*1. A **model:*** Through the verbal and non-verbal communication a teacher communicates Christian principles. Yet a fundamental question for every Christian teacher is, 'Do I walk my talk?' A model for a Christian teacher would include:

- good preparation of lessons.
- enthusiasm in teaching.
- appearance that is acceptable.
- teaching with authority.

*2. A **motivator:*** Not every learner is motivated to learn. Consequently, the teacher must cultivate the interest. This can be done by :

- a teacher performing in class instead of sitting and getting bored.
- a teacher having motivation that comes out of conviction.
- a teacher being a good communicator. A good communicator uses gestures well, varies tone and creates a good learning atmosphere.

*3. **Planner of instruction:*** A teacher must have concrete answers to some of these questions before teaching:

- Where are my learners? Current understanding.
- Where are we going? Objectives.
- How are we going to get there? Means and methods.
- How do we know we have arrived? Evaluation.

Besides answering these four questions., the teacher must be a strategist. This means the teacher needs to know when the students are ready to learn, know the time required for a particular concept and be a resourceful person.

*4. **Manager of behaviour:*** The Christian teacher should know good morals and hence strive to instill them in the lives of the

learners. Moreover, he or she is a counsellor. The teacher should seek ways and means to build up those entrusted to his or her care.

*5. **An intercessor:*** The Lord Jesus Christ is called the master teacher. One thing we know about him is that he spent a lot of time praying. Teachers too need to intercede for their students.

The role of the teacher in Christian education is very important. Coe in Gibbs' book (1992) stated, "The same curriculum materials may have been taught in 1913, 1918 and 1928, but how different the kinds of Christianity that it represented to the people! All this 'not-in-the-curriculum' meaning is mediated to the pupil by the personal presence of the teacher"(Gibbs 1992:250).

Although this was referring to a Christian teacher, a theologian or a pastor has a lot in common with a Christian teacher. The theologian must know his or her congregation in order to preach what is relevant. Besides, without being a model, a theologian will not have much impact on the people. Non-verbal communications speaks a lot more than we think. A boring message too will not go beyond the interest level of the listeners. Consequently, they will not be motivated to apply what is learnt in their lives if at all any learning will take place. A theologian like the teacher must plan the sermon. It must have some direction to where the congregation is intended to be taken. This must be done in much prayer.

The Pupil

The pupil represents nobody else but himself or herself. A learner is a person with needs. Each learner differs from the other as they all come from different backgrounds. Each learner, including adults, is a product of the environment. The environment we come from plays a great role in influencing us. Consequently, the teacher needs to learn some basic psychology in order to be effective in teaching.

Learners have varied ability of concentration. The teacher needs to know that each age varies in their understanding and consequently differs in activities as well.

A learner has perceived needs, some known to him or her while others are unknown and therefore comes to class expecting that those will be met.

Also, each learner has his or her style of learning. When the style of the learner matches with that of the teacher, then learners will be effective. Moreover each learner comes with experiences that can be shared so that others can learn from them, especially in adult classes. The teacher must be sensitive to some of these factors. Indeed, teaching demands that a teacher must adjust accordingly, varying the use of words, the emphasis and pattern of thought and even attitude toward learning. There is also the readiness of the time of learning a certain concept among students. This of course makes the whole process of teaching and learning complicated. But for effective imparting of the truth and helping the learners to internalise the facts presented, teachers and curriculum must never remain static.

The students in many ways can be likened to a congregational member. A pastor should not take for granted that every one who comes to a church service is dying to learn. Many people attend services for various reasons. Some attend to meet friends or network for businesses or other purposes. Other people come with needs that are expected to be met through preaching.

As we enter the 21st century, Christian educationists and theologians must find new directions for doing Christian education and theology. The new direction will need to develop freedom to read, think, analyse and allow the application of Scriptures to develop mature Christians. This is in contrast to superficial living by adhering to regulations and laws without internalising divine truth in one's life. This new approach should set the stage for spiritual formation.

The educational process that is likely to encourage spiritual formation must spring from the following:

1. Review the current training offered to pastors through TEE and theological training institutions. This should include practical courses that address the African situation. For example, courses should be offered on peace and reconciliation,

Christian ethics, stewardship and leadership. These should be part of the core courses for each student.

2. The training should encompass the 'kingdom of God perspective' and be practical in approach through modeling, apprenticeship, mentorship and practicals.
3. The training should take care of every age group and people with special needs, such as refugees and AIDS victims.
4. The training should encourage the building of bridges between the church and Christian agencies.
5. The training should seek ways and means of being catalysts that will result in bringing desired changes, for example, from worldliness to biblical values.
6. The training should seek to internalise biblical truth.
7. The training should assist in developing Christian literature and films.
8. The training should emphasise discipleship and encourage accountability at all levels.

Finally, the new directions in Christian education and theology in Africa will need cooperation from all sectors: government institutions, NGOs and local churches. For example, the theological teachers need to integrate their teaching with faith to impact their students' lives; the pastors and church leaders need to model Christian values; and churches must provide Christian education programmes for the families. Moreover, our homes need to promote Christian principles and we all must promote Christian schools for all levels. Africa must be reawakened to the need of Christian education and pray for God's wisdom and guidance.

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KNOWING THE BIBLICAL AUTHOR'S INTENTION:
The Problem of Distanciation

Yoilah K. Yilpet.

The Bible is at the heart of everything a Christian does, whether it is evangelising, teaching in the local church or developing a theological response to contemporary issues. One's view of Scripture is therefore of fundamental importance. Not only have liberals tried to undermine the authority of Scripture through erroneous views of inspiration, they now seek to dilute and alter the teaching of Scripture through faulty hermeneutics. In fact, the new hermeneutics is the new battleground for evangelicals seeking to maintain biblical authority

In this erudite article Rev. Dr. Yoilah Yilpet examines various approaches to the hermeneutical problem of interpreting an ancient text. The Bible, like all ancient documents, was written in a different culture and under different historical circumstances from anything we know today. How can we who live in the 21st century ever know the intention of the author who wrote in the distant past? In fact, do we need to know his intention? Abandoning the despair of liberal theologians, Yilpet demonstrates that today one can and should seek to interpret the biblical text by determining the author's intention. Anything less will result in total subjectivity and loss of the Christian gospel taught by the Christian church for the past two thousand years.

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INTRODUCTION

The question that is often asked is, 'How can one get to the author's intention or meaning in a passage from an ancient text like the Bible?' And, 'Is it possible to get to the author's intentions?' And, if it is possible, 'How do we get back and find out or recover what the meaning of the text is, especially considering the historical distance between the text and the interpreter/reader?' This is obviously the problem that distanciation (i.e. the historical distance between the text and reader) poses for us as we try to understand and interpret an ancient text like the Bible or any ancient document for that matter. The author is no longer available to us to communicate with us in person and clarify some issues in his text. And the language he spoke and wrote in is a dead language to us with which we do not speak and communicate today.

For some people the historical distance has become a chasm we cannot cross. They even raise the question of whether an ancient text can be intelligible.[1] James Barr rightly puts the intelligibility of an ancient text into proportion when he exclaims, "The fact that a writing is old does not in itself constitute a major difficulty in its comprehension. Of the great of the world, the main part is 'old'".[2] There is communication between the ancient and modern contexts that takes place through the ancient text, because it is written in human language.

The new hermeneutic of some existentialist theologians focused on the problem of transcending the historical particularity and the message of the Scripture by stressing the words *now* and *today* and the need to recapitulate scriptural stories in the interpreter's present existence.[3] Most interpreters, including those in the New

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1 See, D.E. Nineham, 'The Use of the Bible in Modern Theology', *B.J.R.L.* 52 (1969), 181, 191-92.

2 James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (London: SCM, 1973), 140.

3 J.M. Robinson, 'Hermeneutic Since Barth', in *New Frontiers in Theology II: The New Hermeneutic*, eds. J.M. Robinson and J.B. Cobb; 'Hermeneutic', In *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I.H. Marshall

Hermeneutic School have concluded, as E.D. Hirsch correctly analyses, that 'all knowledge is relative'[4] and a return to the author's own meaning is considered both unnecessary and wrong. Instead, meaning has often become a personal, subjective, and a changing thing. 'What speaks to me', 'what turns me on', 'what I get out of a text' are the significant concerns, not what an author intended by his use of words.

In this article, my purpose is to describe the problem caused by distanciation, then briefly point out some solutions given on how to handle this problem in interpretation, and finally, we would argue for the goal of interpretation to be the author's intention in interpreting a text.

THE PROBLEM OF DISTANCIATION

Distanciation is a major problem to the author's intended meaning of a text. The historical distance produces a broad gulf in time and world-view that exists between the ancient text and us (the interpreters/readers). The interpreter who sets out to understand and interpret the text must be aware of this historical distance. With this awareness of the historical distances comes the question, 'how does one get back to the perspective and message of an ancient text?' As Grant Osborne rightly observes, 'the problem is difficult enough when we try to interpret one another, for each of us has a slightly different perspective, and we use the same terms but with different content'.[5] When we consider the biblical text, the problem is greatER because of the historical distance between us and the time the text was written. We have a tendency to read modern issues back into the text, and a purely 'objective' approach which recreates the original meaning/situation without going back to modern pre-understanding is very difficult, and indeed others

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(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 308-333. Thiselton provides a good evaluation and critique of the 'New Hermeneutic' and its practioners.

[4] E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 4.

[5] Grant Osborne, *Class Notes on Hermeutics,* Fall Quarter, 1991, 3.

have argued, impossible.[6] Objective neutrality is the ideal, but in such a stance the interpreter is not free and cannot see how to overcome the historical distance and determine the text's message. Such emphasis on detached observation of the text is impossible.

Mary Ann Tolbert, in acknowledging the problem of distanciation, claims that "it is clear that more than one 'consistent interpretation' of the 'Gospel in all its parts' is possible" and concludes that "multiple interpretations arise... from the necessary historical conditionedness of both texts and readers".[7] She expands further on the problem to support her view of multiple interpretations of an ancient text.

> The historical, cultural, and intellectual distance between current readers and the production of an ancient text like Mark encourages the growth of multiple interpretations. Neither the author of a text nor its readers stand outside the movement of history. The conventions guiding reading and writing, cultural, social and intellectual values, and the very definition of truth itself along with the institutions that erect that definition shift from age to age, from culture to culture, from generation to generation .... From both a theoretical and a practical standpoint, then, multiple interpretations of text are not only legitimate but inevitable.[8]

Tolbert works from the assumption of the real problem of distanciation and then accepts the reader-response argument for multiple interpretations/meanings of a text. Thus, for her the author's intended meaning is not the goal of interpretation. She is skeptical that the modern reader will be able to understand a text, such as Mark, like that of 'the earliest readers and hearers of the Gospel'. We can say that for Tolbert, she allows for the polyvalence or multiple meanings of a text.

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[6] See Jose Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutic* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 117-127.

[7] Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 7.

[8] *Ibid.*, 8.

What we are faced with is this conclusion reached by Tolbert, that multiple meanings are necessary and inevitable because of the historical distance between the interpreter and ancient text. She has given up on consensus regarding the author's intention of a text. But the question is: Is this the best way we should deal with this problem of distanciation? And is this approach legitimate as she claims? How can we bridge the historical one of the ancient text and still recover the truth-intention of the text? Or, should we become completely skeptical as in reader-response criticism which claims that meaning is produced by the reader rather than the text?[9] I would argue that this should not be the case. Instead, we should seek to recover the author's single intended meaning in the text. This is the ethical decision and legitimate interpretation of the text.

SOME PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF DISTANCIATION

Hans-George Gadamer

German Philosopher Hans-George Gadamer in his *Truth and Method,* develops a philosophical hermeneutic which shares some of Martin Heidegger's perspectives and focuses on the types of experiences in which truth is communicated. He develops a theory of historical distance and the fusion of horizons. Gadamer offered a way to bring the ancient text over into the modern world through a *"Fusion of the Horizons"* between the world of the original text and the modern interpreter.[10] For him, historical consciousness and the historical distance it entails pose no problem for hermenutics; they simply clarify the situation and bring to the fore that element in the hermeneutical process which is the essential link between text and interpreter.[11] All interpreters perform their task from a position

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[9] Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980.), 177.

[10] Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 272.

[11] *Ibid.*, 264.

within history. He views interpretation as an historical act, a 'placing of oneself within a process of tradition in which past and present are constantly fused'.[12] This 'tradition' forms our pre-understanding, for it is the present ideals which our experiences and culture have shaped. The 'temporal distance' which is due to human confinement within the boundary of time is not necessarily negative. It helps one to acknowledge that he is historically separated from the text and confined in time. Knowing that time has passed, in consequence, one becomes aware of having pre-understanding (or prejudices) governing his understanding of the text. Therefore, the 'temporal distance' between ourselves and the text becomes a means of sifting our pre-understanding so as to select only those aspects which will prove meaningful in interpreting the text, thus avoiding pure subjectivity. As Gadamer puts it,

> It is only this temporal distance that can solve the really critical question of hermeneutics, namely of distinguishing the true prejudices by which we understand, from the false ones by which we misunderstand.[13]

'Temporal distance' entails the necessity of historical consciousness in the process of understanding of a text, and gradually shows the true historical significance of the text in relation to present context. In this way Gadamer merges the 'horizon of the text' with 'horizon of the interpreter', i.e. merging past with present.[14] This means that the gap between ancient and modern contexts is already bridged. It is filled with the continuity of custom and tradition, which determine the patterns of thought and language of the contemporary culture. In fact, the ancient text – in this case, the Scripture – is a part of that tradition.

Fundamental to Gadamer's hermeneutics is his rejection of the instrumental functions of language. For him, language is the

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12 *Ibid.*, 258.

13 *Ibid.*, 266.

14 *Ibid.*, 269-278.

medium of hermeneutical experience.[15] Over against the platonic emphasis on form and sign character of language, Gadamer points to the nature of the non-instrumental language. It is important to realise that for him, language and text are autonomous entities with a life of their own, and hence they speak to the interpreter as he speaks to the text. As Gadamer puts it,

> Now we are not starting from the object and enquiring into the nature of the word as a means. We are asking what and how it communicates to the person who uses it. It is in the nature of the sign that it has its being solely in its applied function, in the fact that it points to something else. Thus, it must be distinguished in this function from the context in which it is encountered and takes as sign, in order for its own being as an object to be annulled and for it to disappear in its meaning. It is the abstraction of pointing itself.[16]

Gadamer's understanding of language seems to be consistent with a phenomenological analysis of language. For him, man did not make a word (e.g., 'white') and endow it with meaning. He asserts,

> A word is not a sign from which one reached, nor is it a sign that one makes or gives to another, it is not an existent thing which one takes up and to which one accords the ideality of meaning in order to make something count. Rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. It is meaningful already.[17]

Thus, since language is reality and grounded in our very Being and not merely in our thought-life, the two horizons of text and interpreter continually interact, both in tension and in fusion.[18] The end result of Gadamer's hermeneutical model is the fusing of the horizon of the ancient text with that of the contemporary

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15 *Ibid.*, 345.

16 *Ibid.*, 373.

17 *Ibid.*, 377.

18 See, A.C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosopical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980).

interpreter. And if, text and interpreter fuse in a blend of horizons, and the text is autonomous from the moment of its inception, then I believe it is logical to say that the text will have polyvalence or multiple meanings as different interpreters read it.[19]

For Gadamer, the main purpose of hermeneutics is not an attempt to historically reconstruct the author's intention, but rather to historically penetrate into what the text itself says.[20] The meaning of a text is never identical with what the original writer intended to say to the original audience. He asserts that, 'Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author'.[21] The interpreter's horizon, internally his pre-understanding, and externally the ancient text's current position in the tradition – has a decisive role. Gadamer claims that,

> Texts do not ask to be understood as a living expression of the subjectivity of their writers .... What is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships.[22]

The real meaning of the text is determined by the language of the text as presently constituted and by the historical situation of the interpreter and consequently by 'the totality of the objective course of history'.[23]

There are several problems with Gadamer's hermeneutic theory. In the *first* place, are unfruitful pre-judgements/pre-understanding necessarily discarded in the act of interpretation without one consciously doing so? *Secondly*, is tradition, as it were, always right? As Osborne says, 'tradition is given an uncritical role in the act of coming-to-understanding'.[24] *Thirdly*, Gadamer claims that the meaning of a text always goes beyond its author. But, does this

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19 Gadamer, 354-55.

20 *Ibid.*, 353.

21 *Ibid.*, 264.

22 *Ibid.*, 356-7.

23 *Ibid.*, 263.

24 Osborne, 10.

not open the door, as Hirsch claims, to be merely subjective understanding of the text?[25] It is not clear how he avoids the danger of subjective interpretation. And there is no developed methodology in his theory to distinguish between true and false interpretations of a text. Finally, Gadamer's view of language as reality or Being itself is problematic.[26] This view of language cannot provide for information or objective data.

However, Scripture provides objective data about God. Language has both a univocal and analogical function. Univocally, it helps us to know God as He is (e.g. 'God is faithful'); analogically, it pictures God in finite terms. The nature of language as a whole is analogical, but the core of meaning behind it, e.g. 'God is faithful', is univocal. Therefore, the Bible contains both language event and dogmatic content. Gadamer has elevated one side and negated the other. I believe this is unnecessary. His preoccupation with encounter or interaction becomes subjective and without an absolute referent. Original meaning then becomes relative. The original intent of the author must become the control whereby the interpreter is confronted with an absolute truth outside his own horizon.

Paul Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur, a French phenomenologist, has developed a hermeneutical bridge which centres in philosophy of language, especially metaphorical language. He takes metaphor as mimesis and applies both phenomenological and semiotic categories to redefine the dialectic between metaphor and text. For him, metaphor takes place on the level of statement rather than word.[27]

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[25] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 245-264.

[26] See, Thiselton, 'Semantics and New Testament Interpretation' in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I.H. Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 75-104. He has a proper blend of linguistic and historical concerns.

[27] Paul Ricoeur, 'Biblical Hermeneutics: The Metaphorical Process', *Semeia* 4 (1975), 75-78 (cf. pp. 29-148); 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', *Philosophy Today* 17 (Summer 1973), 129-41.

Metaphor is not naming, but is predication. We cannot have a metaphorical word. Metaphors occur only in utterance. Thus, he reworks the classical distinction between "sense" as the objective content of the text and 'reference' as the interpreter's response to the text. Since, metaphor deals with the whole statement rather than the individual term, for Ricoeur it bridges the gap between 'sense' and 'reference' by becoming a living entity, a 'semantic event'.[28] Metaphor breaks through the interpreter's reality to force a new world of meaning upon the interpreter/reader. According to Ricoeur, metaphoric, poetic discourse fictionally redescribes reality.[29] Its basic referent is human experience in all its wholeness. The indirect communication of meaning is characteristic of parable and metaphor. Such language applies a familiar label to a new object which at first resists and then surrenders to the application. 'It is an eclipsing of the objective manipulable world, an illumining of the life-world, of non-manipulable being-in-the-world, which seems to me to be the fundamental ontological import of poetic language'.[30] Because human experience is its basic referent and its mode of expression is indirect, metaphoric/poetic language opens up many possible worlds which can be appropriated by the interpreter, who can then cross the hermeneutical bridge and continue to find meaning in the text.

Thus, Ricoeur redefines the hermeneutical circle. He believes he has found in metaphor a way to bridge Lessing's ditch.[31] The hermeneutical circle is not a subjective interpenetration of author and reader but rather is an ontological 'dialectic between disclosing a world and understanding one's self in front of this world'.[32] Ricoeur adds the semantic function of language to the semiological

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[28] For this understanding and assessment of Ricoeur, I am indebted to Grant Osborne, *Class Notes*, 39-41.

[29] Ricoeur, 'Biblical Hermeneutics', 34, 127-28.

[30] *Ibid.*, .87.

[31] *Ibid.*, 145.

[32] Paul Ricoeur, 'Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics' in *New Literary History* 6 (1974): 107-108 (cf. pp. 103-110).

and argues for the creative element of language as existential encounter. This post-semiotic perspective goes beyond the view of language as a closed system of signs (which deals with "dead" metaphors) to a phenomenologically dynamic semantics.

For Ricoeur a 'text' is 'any discourse fixed by writing'.[33] and hermeneutics is 'the art of discerning the discourse in the work'.[34] Text interpretation for him, consists of two parts: 'To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference: from what it says, to what it talks about'.[35] Interpretation is not over when the work is merely explained. For Ricoeur, 'reading is like execution of a musical score; it marks the realisation, the enactment, of the semantic possibilities of the text'.[36] These semantic possibilities must not only be uncovered but must be seriously considered by the reader, for only when the message is received can we say that something has been communicated,

> We can, as readers, remain in the suspense of the text, treating it as a worldless and authorless object; in this case, we explain the text in terms of its internal relations, its structure. On the other hand, we can lift the suspense and fulfill the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, we interpret the text.[37]

In his discussion of 'distanciation', Ricoeur argues that writing as discourse becomes an 'event' and a 'work' which immediately becomes distanced from the author.[38] Writing entails a veritable upheaval of the language-world relations, which results in what he terms the 'threefold semantic autonomy'[39] of the text. This means,

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[33] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* Translated by J.B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 145.

[34] *Ibid.,* 138.

[35] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 87-88.

[36] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, p. 159.

[37] *Ibid.,* 152.

[38] Ricoeur, 'Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', 129-130.

[39] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

first, that the meaning of the text is no longer equated with the author's intention. Because the author is no longer there to clarify his intentions, the text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author.[40] Second, the text is also cut off from its original context and its original audience. Free from it original *Sitz im leben*, the text is open to an unlimited series of reading by other audiences. Third, the autonomy of the text from its original situation means it is no longer able to refer ostensively. What the text and the reader share is not a situation, but what Ricoeur calls a 'world'. Since a text is 'open to an unlimited series of readings', it 'decontextualizes' itself in new situations; in this 'distanciation' from the author is inherent both in the text as written and as interpreted. 'Distanciation' (i.e. the distance between the historical text and the present interpreter) is only a barrier between the interpreter and author, but in the text the worlds or horizons come together. Interpretation is text and not author-centred. For Ricoeur too, 'distanciation' is also the 'fundamental characteristic in the historicity of human experience', and is actually what makes human communication possible. His 'primordial instance' of 'distanciation' is the 'dialect of event and meaning'.[41]

Thus, for Ricoeur the role of hermeneutics is to discover the new world of meaning that is established by metaphor, then experience it, and thereby unite objective meaning with existential relevance by pointing toward the world of the text and the world of the self at the same time.[42] In his concept of discourse as 'work', a text is to link together series of partial ideas of meanings interwoven into a whole. The hermeneutical circle established involves the constant intrusion of the interpreter's own perspective as well as the autonomous nature of the text itself. His theory of 'distanciation' is grounded in the ontological nature of language itself. Language is no longer a closed system of signs but an existential encounter, which allows the interpreter to read into the text.

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[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Ricoeur, 'Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation', 129-130.

[42] I am indebted to Grant Osborne for this understanding. *Class Notes*, 40-41.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical model has some problems. First of all, I doubt whether he has avoided the charge of subjectivism. His preoccupation with linguistic encounter becomes subjective, and without an absolute referent, interpretation becomes relative. The same criticism of Gadamer above, applies to Ricoeur's view of language. I agree with Tolbert who takes issue with the view that all language is metaphorical, arguing that language thereby will become 'unrecognizable and meaningless'.[43] There are both 'dead' (static) and 'live' (dynamic) metaphors in the linguistic endeavour. Secondly, Ricoeur's hermeneutics replaces the 'intention' of the text with 'polyvalence' or 'multiple meanings'. The original meaning of the text disappears from the hermeneutical horizon. Interpretation is not nearly as open-ended as he makes it to be. His refusal to distinguish meaning from significance and equating the individual's interaction (or 'existential encounter") with the text's meaning is exceedingly dangerous. One may ask, "Is it possible to isolate the 'literal meaning' of the text or are we caught in Ricoeur's hermeneutical circle which makes objective interpretation impossible?"

James Barr

We shall consider one more approach in dealing with the problem of distanciation in interpretation. There are those who think that the author's intention is an inaccessible goal and, therefore, a useless object of interpretation. Indeed, the two approaches we have considered thus far have the same attitude. But the solution for dealing with the problem is what James Barr calls 'cultural relativism'. He claims our perspective is limited by our own cultural experience, and so we cannot fully understand the author's perspective. Barr has summarised the effect of cultural relativism.

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[43] Mary Ann Tolbert, 'Polyvalence and the Parables: A Consideration of J.D. Crossan Cliffs of Gall', *Seminar Papers SBL* 1980, 63-7.

> The Bible, like all other literature, is *dependent* on the cultural milieu (in fact, a plurality of cultural milieus) in which it was written. Our modern culture is different, and it is *not possible* that the same work, the Bible, can have the same meaning as it had in its own cultural milieu. Any work or text composed in an ancient time and an ancient culture has its meaning in that time and that culture, and in our time or culture may have a different meaning or indeed may have no meaning at all.[44]

Thus, Barr would allow for multiple meanings in the text as a way of bridging the historical distance. For him, since the biblical writers are understood to have been conditioned by their cultures and since ancient assumptions are different from ours, perception and interpretation will also be different.

There are three arguments against this position and approach of cultural relativism. *First*, cultural perspective ultimately implies that verbal meaning exists *only* by virtue of the perspective that gives it existence.[45] It follows that it is impossible to distort a meaning that cannot exist in the modem world. *Second,* from the viewpoint of biblical revelation, the authors and interpreters, despite cultural differences, have in common what is necessary to communicate. They are, by means of creation, made in the image of God. One aspect of God's image is the ability to communicate. Communication is by definition a sharing of meaning that occurs through public signs of language that have relationship to this meaning. It is impossible to recover an author's private meaning and cultural experiences, because they involve emotions, reactions about him, and his consciousness at the time of writing. But, meaning can be reproduced from the text, even if the cultural experience is inaccessible. *Third,* ancient cultural writings represent a special case of communication with another person through writing. It is necessary to share facts of the language and assumptions in the culture so as not to miss allusions or mistake the contemporary sense of words, but these are preliminary tasks that remain squarely in the public domain. It is to recover the author's

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[44] Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World*, 39 (italics added).

[45] Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation*, 48.

intended meaning in the text due to the linguistic signs for communication and the universality of language.

THE GOAL OF INTERPRETATION IS THE AUTHOR'S INTENDED MEANING

First of all, we must acknowledge the existence of an author when reading a text. Somebody has to create a text. We must also acknowledge that most texts reflect an author's desire to communicate. A text represents an author's will to communicate. We have an obligation to honour a human being's desire to communicate. By denying the importance of the author, we betray the lack of concern to hearing the author's viewpoint. I would dare to say that denying the importance of the author is verging on intellectual arrogance, not wanting to know anything about that person's cultural milieu. As Hirsch maintains that literary theories and emphases in interpretation reflect 'ethical choices'.[46] We must decide what should be the 'goals of interpretation' and in making the decision 'we have to enter the realm of ethics'.[47] Interpretation is never innocent of ethical motives and goals. For Hirsch the issue is clear: those who choose to ignore authorial intention are guilty of a vicious type of intellectual domination,

> To treat an author's words merely as grist for one's mill is ethically analogous to using another man merely for one's own purposes.[48]

When we engage a text 'solipsistically', we in effect manipulate and abuse the intentions of another person.

Thus, the first issue to be considered is the question of the goal of interpretation. The task of hermeneutics should be to delineate the proper goal of interpretation. Following Hirsch's ethical argument above, I believe the goal of interpretation must be the author's intended meaning in the text. We must seek to understand what the

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46 *Ibid.*, 77.

47 *Ibid.*, 85.

48 *Ibid.*, 91.

biblical text meant to a person living in that historical and cultural context. The priority should be for determining the original author's intended meaning which is the true core of biblical interpretation. First, we seek the cognitive knowledge and then apply that knowledge to life. The key hermeneutical question is, 'What was the original author's meaning when he wrote a particular text?'

Dr. Walter Kaiser also feels that the issue of the goal of interpretation is the point of crisis in hermeneutics.

> The issue must be put bluntly: Is the meaning of a text to be defined solely in terms of the verbal meaning of that text as those words were said by the Scriptural author? Or should the meaning of a text be partly understood in terms of what it now means to me, the reader and interpreter? There hangs one of the great dilemmas of our age. And there also hangs the fortunes of the authority of scripture.[49]

For him, the single meaning of a text is the author's intended meaning.

Hirsch also argues forcefully, using a pragmatic foundation for this goal in interpretation. He says,

> To banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.[50]

Thus, the goal of the author's intention is not simply a pragmatic goal but a necessary goal. It is necessary because of the very nature of verbal communication. Verbal communication is the expression of a message by an author to an audience.

Now that we have established the goal of interpretation as the author's intended meaning, one must, however, ask whether this 'intended meaning' can be discovered at all, due to the problem of distanciation. First of all, we would adopt the distinction of Hirsch between meaning and significance,

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[49] Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 24.

[50] E.D. Hirsch, *Validity of Interpretation*.

> *Meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance* on the other hand, names a relationship between the meaning and a person or a conception of a situation.[51]

Thus, he separates 'meaning', the act of comprehending the intended message of a text, from 'significance', the act of inserting that meaning into a present context or structure; for instance, one's own value-system.

Hirsch also distinguishes between 'private meaning' and 'intended meaning'. The relativists (he calls them 'cognitive atheists') deny any such distinction between 'private meaning' and 'intended meaning' or between 'meaning' and 'significance'.[52] To subvert the goal of interpretation (which is objective knowledge) is to reduce all knowledge to the horizon of one's own prejudices and personal predilections. It is doubtful if one can learn anything by usurping the author's meaning in a text and inserting one's own. To do this is to replace the 'intention' of the text with 'polyvalence' or 'multiple meanings'.

The crucial issue that distanciation causes is the possibility of moving behind one's own pre-understanding to the text. There are differences in culture, social and world-view that make up the interpreter's pre-understanding. And also, if the text is totally autonomous from the author, and the reader/interpreter cannot move from significance to meaning, then the intention of the author can never be determined. But, as Osborne has shown through his study of 'Genre Criticism', it is impossible to have a complete autonomy of the text. He demonstrated convincingly how genre of the text can provide the viability of identifying the author's intended meaning. Genre as a dynamic tool makes it possible to discover the 'literal sense' of a passage. It also provides the linguistic framework for the semantic verification which the interpreter attempts in the hermeneutical process. It plays a positive role as a hermeneutical tool for determining the intended meaning of the

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[51] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 8.

[52] Hirsch, *Aims of Interpretation*, 2, 36, 49.

text. As Osborne puts it, 'genre is more than a means of classifying literary types; it is an epistemological tool for unlocking meaning in individual texts'.[53]

Returning to the issue of pre-understanding, the very 'historical distance' which is part of the hermeneutical circle, demands that the interpreter becomes aware of his pre-understanding and allows the text to challenge his own world. It is with this in mind that we would place our study of 'meaning' as a crucial preliminary step in hermeneutics. So, while we agree that purely objective or scientific understanding is impossible and that a shared understanding between the interpreter and text are necessary, 'distanciation' itself has a positive purpose in making the interpreter aware of his own pre-understanding so that the text may challenge his own world of reality. I agree with Thiselton who argues correctly that it is one thing to 'understand the text ... more *deeply* and more *creatively* and another to understand it *correctly*' (italics his).[54]

The fact that an author is no longer present to explain the meaning of the text once it is written, does not mean that the text is 'autonomous' from the author. Even though the difficulties of objective interpretation are great, this does not mean that texts could not be objectively understood and that they should be read anew in each situation and given new meanings. But the simple fact is that we read a text on the basis of our own background, pre-understanding and traditions. Pre-understanding and traditions can be positive in helping us understand the text and determine its meaning. In fact, as Osborne puts it, 'It is not only impossible but dangerous to put our knowledge and theological tradition aside as we study a biblical text'.[55] That very knowledge provides categories for understanding the text itself. At the same time, we should be conscious of the fact that 'these traditions have potential for controlling the text and determining its meaning'.[56]

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53 *Ibid.*, 182.

54 Thiselton, *The New Hermeneutic*, 323.

55 Osborne, *Class Notes*, 2.

56 *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

There are indeed two definite horizons: that of the text (e.g. the Bible) and the interpreter. In the Bible, there is a clear statement of authorial intent in passage after passage regarding the normativeness of the propositional truth content. The Bible was written within the vortex of a series of special cultures and times. No interpreter has the right to make that text say whatever he or she wants it to say. The text must be allowed to say what it wants to say, but respect must be had for the particular setting and culture in which it was written.

Through the grammatico-historical exegesis we must try to recover the author's intended meaning from the text. In our exegesis of a text, genuine exegetical problems and differences might arise from our interpretation of the text, but the goal of our interpretation is one – namely, the author's intended meaning. Interpreters might take different options of meanings suggested by the syntactical relationships of the structure in the text itself. But, at least there is textual control over the meanings/interpretations they hold, and not their subjective views. Then, hopefully they would be humble enough to allow the other person's interpretation to challenge theirs and to make them go back to the text to reexamine the evidence. Interpreters should try to reach a consensus if they all believe that the text has one single author's intended meaning.

I believe that genuine exegetical issues are quite different from the issue of 'polyvalence' or 'multiple meanings' in the text. The exegetical problems are few compared to the bulk of material in the Bible. Again, genre is one among many tools in the grammatico-historical interpretation that can contribute to the unlocking of the rules of the proper language game in order to trace the text back to its original, intended meaning. Thus, I believe that recovering the author's intended meaning is a viable possibility and that we should not be skeptical. We can approach the certainty of the text meaning far more than we realise.

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ABALUYIA MARRIAGE AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Patrick Eshuchi Mukholi
Mary Kayume Omollo
Uzo Asiachi Nanjero

African Christian Theology is always concerned about relating biblical teaching to traditional customs. Because Evangelicals believe that all truth is God's truth, we are prepared to accept truth whatever its source and wherever it is found. Because Evangelicals believe in natural revelation and common grace, we recognise that customs and cultures reflect the divine revelation alongside of the depravity and rebellion of natural man. Hence we are always eager to assess and evaluate customs and cultures to ascertain what is biblical and approved by God and what is to be rejected as emanating from the sinful nature.

The authors of this article examine their own traditional beliefs about marriage among the Abaluyia and seek to find ways for the church to strengthen Christian marriage among their people.

Patrick Eshuchi Mukholi, Mary Kayume Omollo, Uzo Asiachi Nanjero were students in the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Kenya, when they researched and wrote this paper for a course taken with Dr. Victor Cole. Mary is from the *Abatiriki* sub-tribe of the *Abaluyia* and did research on divorce; Patrick is from the *Abashisa* and researched the world view and preparation for marriage among the *Abaluyia;* Uzo is from the *Abanyole* and did research on the transition into marriage.

INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to highlight some of the aspects of the *Abaluyia* traditional marriage. The authors seek to suggest that the church could be relevant today, albeit in the dynamic modern period. The aspects dealt with are preparation for life and marriage itself and divorce. We think that these are very pertinent issues for the pastorate today.

It should be pointed out, however, that the *Abaluyia* comprise sixteen major sub-tribes which may differ at various points in custom. Indeed, the authors are from three different groups. However, the practices are quite similar on the whole, and as Wagner points out, 'the cosmologic and cosmological ideas agree in most essentials' (Wagner 1976:30).

But before tackling any of these issues, it is helpful to understand a bit of the *Abaluyia* world view pertaining to marriage.

ABALUYIA TRADITIONAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Abaluyia World View

Among the *Abaluyia*, it is the obligation of every man and woman to marry and procreate. Any marriage is not complete without children. Not to marry is an abnormal thing which disrupts the social set up of the whole community of elders, ancestors and *emisambwa* (guardian spirits). Indeed, this and childlessness calls for ritual cleansing where various *emisango* are offered to remove the *oluswa* and to bring fruitfulness.

The senior members of the clan and family view failure to marry and childlessness as threats to their existence, both in the physical and spiritual worlds. Who will take care of them in old age is an issue, and then, there will be no one to serve and sacrifice to them when they die (Wagner 1976: 35). Moreover the *emisambwa* would be displeased and may wreak some retribution on the family or even clan. Cases are known where some ancestral spirit makes a child cry continuously until the child is named after that spirit. In

marriage and child bearing there is, therefore, the continuity of name, family, clan and tribe. The person with many children, especially first born boys, is said to be 'one who has eaten with their right hand' (Wako 1988:21), no wonder the *Luyia* anthem says, *Mwana wa mberi, ni eshiekhoyero* (the first born is a pride).

The more children there are, higher the social status of the family and security of the clan (Lihanda *et al* 1981: 8). Barrenness among other *oluswa* (curses) means a poor ritual status, hence one cannot command authority or enjoy prestige. Further, for the woman, children were her security to remain in the home.

A successful life therefore is one lived to the satisfaction of *Were Khakaba* (God), *emisambwa*, the ancestors, elders of clan, sub-tribe and family. Knowledge that one will depart to the spirit world makes him strive to perpetuate ancestral lineage and therefore his existence. Marriage is then, not an end, but a means to continuity of life. Marriage brings together the past and future generations. Besides, while new family relations are being forged and cemented by birth of children, the departed are 'reincarnated' (Wagner, 1976:49). Even in the creation myths it is said, God provided man with a woman so that he might multiply (Wagner 1976:31,43). Is it then surprising that elaborate arrangements are made for the preparation of the children for the future?

Abaluyia Preparation for Marriage

Children grew and slept in the parents' house up to the age of six to ten when they would undergo some sort of initiation. Learning started early by the example of what the parents were doing. Girls stayed with their mothers, learning all about household chores, child care and farming. The boys followed the fathers in house building, cattle rearing and war (Lihanda *et al* 1981:6-7;15-16). For all children, story telling, riddles and proverbs formed a large part of their daily training in family mores. These were told by the elderly.

After initiation and puberty, the initiates can no longer stay in their parent's house. Initiation is circumcision for boys and to some extent removal of lower incisors (Wagner 1939:7). Female circumcision is largely unknown apart from the *Terik*, a mixed

group bordering the *Nandis*. Most girls would receive tribal marks on their faces as a rite of passage.

Circumcision season was and still is a time of much learning, song and revelry. The *abasinde* (initiates – persons not yet sacrificed for), go round scantily dressed, painted in white clay, singing, dancing and soliciting gifts from relatives. They then retreat into the forests, where they are not only circumcised but are taught hardship endurance and tribal values. They stay in shacks called *Murumbi*, their wounds being nursed as they learn about how to conduct themselves in marriage (Lihanda *et al* 1981:16). Secrets learnt in these places are never to be divulged to any outsider or especially women.

The boys, having become full members of the commonwealth of the clan, now move to an *isiimba* (the bachelor hut of an elder brother or friend) before they put up their own. The older of these young men taught the younger on family conduct among other things.

The *eshibinze* or *eshinoko* was the place the girls moved to and stayed under the tutelage of an elderly aunt or grandmother, usually a widow. She trains them in matters of being faithful, loyal wives and mothers, and the evil of premarital pregnancies (Lihanda *et al* 1981:16,17). Education also continued as the girls worked around the house went to the river with other older women and worked round the farms communally. This was to instil diligence in the girls, showing them that lazy women were not to be married.

In the *eshibuti*, where elders relaxed with some liquor, matters pertaining to marriage could be discussed in the hearing of the young men. They were also sometimes allowed to listen into the cases in the 'courts'. Now that they were considered men they could carry out any conversation with any elder. Boys were at ease with their grandfathers and would accompany them to all sorts of places as part of their training. So they learned how to take care of their future homes, about war, famine, death and sacrifices.

So when one was ready to marry they knew exactly what was expected of them in taking care of their *Litala* (homestead).

Abaluyia Transition into Marriage

When a young man wanted to marry, a go-between called *wanjira* would be selected to investigate the lady whom the man and his family were interested in (Wako 1988:3). *Wanjira* did this unobtrusively and discreetly and when satisfied, let the suitor know. The man's family then openly declared their intent to the girl's family who also asked for time in which they too investigated this family. They tried to be their best, hiding any kind of disease or secret witchcraft practices. Kinship marriage was absolutely forbidden (Wako 1988:4).

When nothing was found to be the matter, a *ehunwa* (cow) was given to the girl's family and bride-price negotiations begun immediately. It was taboo for the boy to plan his engagement and marriage without the investigations and involvement of both families. It could cause enmity between the families (Wako 1988:4).

But when all negotiation steps went smoothly, the girl's family would escort her to her husband with pomp and food. All the while there has been no communication allowed between the couple. Now several celebrations take place at both homes. *Ingombe yo khubuka amakulu* (the cow to cover the footsteps) is given (Wako 1988:12). The marriage celebrations were usually concluded with the slaughter and sacrifice of a goat for the purpose of blessing and protecting the new bride (*imbusi yetsinuni*).

After marriage, married sons continued to live with their parents, obviously not sharing their parents' house, until they could set up a family homestead of their own, usually after the birth of at least one child (Wagner 1939:6). The new wife is then permitted to have her own cooking place, following the *eshitekho* rite to celebrate the new status of motherhood and fatherhood. Having children meant that one was now no longer a boy or girl but really, a man and a wife, who may now receive visitors (*Ibid.*, 9). A prolific wife will command a lot of respect. A man may marry more wives, though the first one remains special and honoured.

Abaluyia and Divorce

Like many other traditional societies, marriage was never expected to breakdown. As has been shown, marriage was complete and final after the birth of children. Gifts had already been given and received, sealing the relationship therefore making it very difficult to dissolve it. To the knowledge of the authors, there is no word for divorce among *Abaluyia.*

Be that as it may, marriage did breakdown for a variety of causes. The one most important cause was the inability to bear children. As was observed in the world view, barrenness blocks the stream of life. Still, neither barrenness nor bearing of daughters was openly accepted as grounds for divorce but were more often than not the real causes. Unfortunately, it was rather one sided. If it happened to be the man who was barren, his brother could father children for him. An alternative to divorce was to bring in a *omuyeeti*, that is, a woman to help the barren wife.

Other causes were repeated infidelity on the part of the woman; persistent evasion of marital duties by either partner, *obulosi* (witchcraft), or if a wife openly lives with another man with no intention of returning. A wife who ran to her parents with no good reason was promptly sent back to her husband. The offended partner may bring the matter before the court of elders (*eshiina*) to be sorted out. Flimsy reasons could not be accepted to send away a wife. In the case that the union had to be severed, then the full bride-wealth had to be returned to the man. Marriage remained valid until this was done. The wife thereafter laid no claim either to the children or any property. She went away in shame, hoping that the children would redeem her one day. As Mbiti points out, dissolution of marriage created a great scar in the community concerned (Mbiti 1969:145). This is because marriage is viewed as a 'process' of enhancing *obulamu* (life), not snuffing it out. All in all, divorce was the exception rather than the rule.

THE CHURCH'S EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN MARRIAGE AMONG THE ABALUYIA

The Old and New Testaments hold a high view of marriage. It is understood to be perpetuation of that fundamental social unit which God created. Divorce was extraordinary, an action hated by God (Mal. 2:6). God expects his will to be taught and inculcated in every generation and culture (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:6:7; Matt. 28:20; Eph. 6:4).

Now, culture cannot be completely abandoned when people become Christians. Every part of it must be carefully evaluated. Some aspects of it may be helpful, some neutral and some harmful to the gospel. Those practices which are in line with the gospel must be emphasised as a bridge to that culture. In our particular context, principles from particular rites of passage in the family should be used to enrich families in the church. Our world view is shaped by the Bible.

Preparation for and Enrichment of Marriage

What may the church do as modernity breaks up the close knit kinship and family system in which all education took place? How may we help Christians to build strong family structures in the midst of individualism, rebellion and ignorance that are disastrous to marriages even in the church?

We would like to suggest that education should begin in the church at all levels. In the traditional society children begin to learn at tender ages. The parents, grandparents and other kin spent a lot of time preparing the young ones for life. The modern parent, because of pressure to earn a living, has little time, if any, for the children. Other kin members are far off, busy in their own pursuits. So children grow up in ignorance and get into relationships and marriages through hearsay. Terrible mistakes are consequently made with irreparable damage.

Parental Priority

Parents must be taught over and over again that the development of their family is their first priority. What will it profit a man if he

gains the whole world and loses his family? This traditional and biblical idea must be stressed in sermons, Bible studies, seminars and camps. Deuteronomy 4 and 6 are primary. This may mean introducing family life departments in the church to sharpen this primary unit of society. The family altar is of course not negotiable.

Professional Laity

Together with parental training there is no shortage of all sorts of professionals in the church who could replace the traditional specialists. Whereas aunts, uncles and grandparents strained themselves to bring up especially good girls, so that they might obtain a portion of the bride wealth, today Christian doctors, lawyers, counsellors, gynaecologists, and others, could do it to gain an imperishable crown! The trouble is they are never asked and their abilities not employed by the church.

Godfathers and Mothers

The ideas of godparents when people are baptised or confirmed in some churches and best couples in weddings are good, comparable to the kin who traditionally trained people for life. But these are poorly utilised. Godparents and best couples hardly know their discipling responsibilities. The pastorate must teach them the enormity of their responsibilities, even being answerable to God. Like *Wanjira* (go between), they must be selected carefully.

Priority of Children and Youth Ministries

A growing church is one with vibrant children's and youth ministries. These are the people who need the pastoral resources most, but are ignored in most churches, and at best treated as appendages. Children and youth in the traditional society were never treated this way. They were valued, trained, initiated and incorporated into the clan. Should the church of Christ not care more for those it baptises, confirms, dedicates and weds every year? Camps could take the place of the annual initiation ceremonies. What about Vacation Bible Schools? An untested idea in Africa! Why not take these opportunities to teach youth about puberty, sexuality, passion, virginity, relationship with the opposite sex,

courtship, engagement, marriage commitment, love, conflict resolution and accountability? This would help prepare the youth to live in a God honouring way in this ungodly society. Intelligent decision will be made for richer fulfilled families.

The authors are impressed in this area by a Nairobi church that holds marriage preparation classes for those aspiring to marry. Should couples marry without a graduation certificate?

Communal Wedding Support

Weddings in the traditional society were a communal effort from both families. Challenge and encouragement should be given to church fellowships to carry one another's burden instead of the exploitative pre-wedding parties. Weddings should be simple, not extravagant.

Conflict Resolution

Like in the Bible, divorce was tolerated but not easily granted. A husband had to present his case convincingly to the elders before he could get back his bride wealth. At the same time a woman could not just take off for flimsy reasons. Her parents would send her back. The church should encourage dialogue and communication by organising family enrichment seminars and also ask relevant professionals to be available for hurting marriages. This vacuum must be filled or else Satan fills it with breakdown and divorces. The pulpit must be used to the maximum in emphasising these matters.

CONCLUSION

Perfecting the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry

What we have said, cannot be done by the clergy alone. Elders are to ensure that members have appropriated the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given them. God has provided many people with various abilities in His body, the Church. It is the work of the pastorate to

seek out these (various gifts and offices) and organise them to edify the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

As elders ensure that the above takes place, believers will be spared from any departure from truth to error. The believers then will know the Word of God's grace in order to distinguish that which is traditional and harmful to the gospel from that which is traditional but not harmful to the gospel. This will only take place as they are encouraged to sanctify themselves for the priesthood of all believers (Acts 20:29-32).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Francis Kimani Githieya

THE FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT:
African Indigenous Churches in Kenya
Atlanta, Georgia, USA: Scholars Press, 1997.

Githieya's work is based on his doctoral research at Emory University, Atlanta, into the history and theology, particularly the ecclesiology, of two Kenyan independent churches, the African Orthodox Church (AOC) and the Agikuyu Spirit Church (Arathi). As the author admits in his preface, his intention is to rehabilitate these churches in the eyes of other scholars who have used expressions such as 'tribal' or 'nativistic' to describe them. He sets out to do this by presenting their own 'true self-understanding', and he concludes that they are 'new, African and Christian all at the same time'.

Initially the author examines the socio-historical background in which the two churches arose, describing the Agikuyu people, the initial establishment of Christian churches in central Kenya by western missions, and the policies of the colonising power. He argues that the teaching and practices of missions such as AIM and CMS undermined traditional values, while the acquisition of land by the missions and the colonial authorities, coupled with attempts to impose wage labour, disrupted social cohesion.

This provoked a growing Agikuyu reaction culminating in the 'Muthirigu Crisis' of 1929 over the issue of female circumcision, when large numbers of Agikuyu left the mission churches and in time formed their own. Among the new churches was the African Orthodox Church which now claims one and a half million members. Githieya discusses its origins, its splits, the process by which it became affiliated to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, its proscription by the British authorities in the 1950s, and then its subsequent re-establishment and further splits.

By contrast the Agikuyu Spirit Church originated not in secession from a mission church but through the activities of prophetic figures who claimed to have received a divine calling, including Joseph Ng'ang'a and Musa Thuo. Ng'ang'a apparently experienced his call in a dream during an illness which followed a bout of drunkenness. He began preaching a millennial message whose thrust was the 'freeing of the Agikuyu from their colonial rulers'. He also denounced certain Agikuyu practices (sorcery, witchcraft, sacrifices to ancestors), and some western ones too (western medicine, ways of dressing, and foods). The authorities were alarmed at the millenarian tendencies of the Arathi and their rejection of medical services, and this led to arrests and confrontations, a growing Arathi militancy and the eventual proscription of the movement. However, the church continued, though much divided: between 1960 and 1970 fourteen different groups were registered by the Kenyan government.

In his discussion of the ecclesiologies of the two churches Githieya identifies the leading characteristics by which each understands itself, and thereby seeks to refute the view that they, and other African Independent Churches, are simply 'tribal'. He argues that they are to be seen as true churches, and compares them favourably with the 'mission' churches, praising especially their warmth, the level of indigenisation they have achieved, and their refusal to identify with the political or ecclesiastical status quo. In a comparison of the ecclesiologies of the two churches, he nevertheless recognises the presence of what he terms 'unresolved tensions in their theologies', a euphemism in fact for substantial weaknesses.

The Freedom of the Spirit undoubtedly contributes to our understanding of what are clearly two significant African Independent Churches, and gives insights into the African Independent Church movement in general. It is thoroughly documented with substantial footnotes and a reasonable bibliography. It is well laid out and on the whole lucidly written. The author is sympathetic to his subject, which is in some respects an advantage. Nevertheless he never clearly resolves the central issue of what constitutes a true church. He briefly reviews various

criteria which have been applied to identify one, and he argues that the two bodies under discussion understand themselves as true churches. In his words, to be the church is for them, 'first and foremost to experience God's liberating redemption in Christ'. In the context this seems to refer primarily to liberation from the domination of mission churches and their imposition of western customs and values. However, such an approach does not go far towards establishing the positive marks of a true church. From an evangelical perspective a central issue would have to be the nature of the message that is proclaimed, but here he is tantalisingly brief. Githieya makes some valid points. Missionaries have not always shown cultural sensitivity and have sometimes been too ready to denounce what they did not understand. Mission established churches are not the only possible form. But there is little that is new here, and there is sometimes a feeling that the author is fighting the old battles over again. The gospel challenges and condemns every fallen human culture at certain points. Maybe those who first brought the gospel did not always deal with cultural issues as sensitively as they might have done, but how do we respond to those issues now, in our own generation? What indeed does the Word of God say or imply about the practice of female circumcision? In revisiting the controversy, what should be said substantively about that and other 'cultural' issues? While sometimes perhaps regretting the cultural insensitivity of missionaries, we need to beware of the pitfall of absolutising or idealising cultural tradition too.

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THE MORAL QUEST:
Foundations of Christian Ethics
Leicester, England: Apollos, 1997

In *The Moral Quest* Stanley Grenz 'attempts to lay a foundation for Christian ethical living'. He notes in his introduction that every person must face ethical challenges, and that this has always been the case. However, he argues that in the modern world (and he is thinking primarily of the West) living ethically has become harder, due partly to the possibilities offered by modern technological advance, and partly to the erosion of the earlier biblically based moral consensus brought about by the rise of pluralistic relativism. The Christian challenge is to live individually and corporately in a way that pleases God, which means being fully attuned to the present situation, analysing the issues that arise, and applying appropriate Christian principles to them.

The first two-thirds of the book set the stage for Grenz's own contribution to the subject. In a very good and promising opening chapter he discusses the ethical task and general ethical theory. His crucial conclusion here is that 'philosophical ethical systems leave us in an anthropocentric cul-de-sac, because they by necessity lack a transcendent point of reference' (p.235). He then examines five Greek approaches to ethics, which have shaped subsequent Christian thinking in the West. The following summary of the biblical material, 'Ethics in the Bible', is surprisingly brief in the context of the book as a whole, given the central importance of its theme for any consideration of a specifically Christian ethical 'quest'. He goes on to discuss Christian ethical approaches: three from the past (Augustine, Aquinas and Luther), and seven from the present, where in a breathless whistle-stop tour he briefly examines the ethical ideas of a whole host of people (Rauschenbusch, Barth, Gustafson, Nygren, Ramsey, Fletcher, Bonhoeffer, McClendon, Luther King, Gutiérrez, Ruether, Gilligan, Noddings, MacIntyre, Hauerwas, Henry and O'Donovan). The material in these two

chapters can be heavy going (though the sections on Luther and Carl Henry are a breath of fresh air!), and is not greatly exploited in the remaining third of the book where the author sets out his own contribution to the subject. There could, moreover, have been more substantial critiques of the thinkers he describes.

In the last three chapters he discusses the relationship between Christian ethical thinking and the universal human ethical quest; seeks to lay the theological foundations of a Christian ethic; and finally identifies 'comprehensive love' as its content. In an epilogue he points out that ethics is to be placed in the context of worship: we worship God with the whole of our lives. Along with chapter one, this section is the best part of the book. However, there are some reservations. Discussing what he calls the 'heteronomous' approach to establishing a biblical ethic - looking primarily to the Bible - he sets up what looks very much like a caricature of the position taken by many evangelicals and then proceeds to attack it. Some of the points he makes here are certainly valid; for example, the necessity of the work of the Spirit to produce a life that pleases God, and the uselessness of a merely external conformity to God's commands. However, it is highly questionable whether the writers he criticises actually hold the position he is attacking - some sort of sterile, Spirit-less, legalistic ethic which looks for a mere outward conformity to rules drawn from Scripture. Moreover, it is certainly not the case that an emphasis on the 'objective givenness of the Word' entails that sort of ethic. In stressing his point he appears at times to fall into the trap of false dichotomy; 'true obedience is not marked by outward compliance to a set of laws but by inward piety' (e.g., Mk 7:1-23). While genuine godliness must certainly come from within, obedience will, nevertheless, necessarily be marked by outward conformity; indeed, part of the Lord's criticism of the Pharisees in the passage Grenz cites here, was precisely their failure to conform in practice to the Law. In his discussion on love in the final chapter Grenz attaches too much weight to a lexical analysis of the different Greek words used for aspects of love - *storge, eros, philia, agape* - depending at times on definitions drawn from Kittel's 'Theological Dictionary of the New Testament'. To establish a New Testament concept of love he might have spent

more time exegeting and analysing the passages in which the vocabulary and concepts of love are embedded. Words have meaning in contexts. Indeed, generally he seems to be more at ease discussing ethics from a philosophical or theological perspective than analysing the biblical data.

Nevertheless, *The Moral Quest* is a comprehensive and very helpful exploration of its subject. Subheadings guide the reader through the argument and there are occasional anecdotes set apart from the main text to illuminate a point. It has an extensive bibliography and is thoroughly documented (but why do publishers relegate footnotes to the back of the book?). It is undoubtedly western in its orientation, which diminishes its usefulness in the African context, but it will nevertheless serve as a most useful introduction to its subject.

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Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds.

DICTIONARY OF PAUL AND HIS LETTERS
A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship.
Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

This book is the second in a three volume set of dictionaries on the New Testament published by InterVarsity Press. The first treated Jesus and the Gospels (1992), while the third covered the Later New Testament and Its Developments (1997). This volume on Paul and His Letters seeks to assist a broad audience: students hoping to gain an entree into various areas of Pauline scholarship, pastors looking for insights from the best of recent scholarship,

scholars seeking summaries of research and bibliographical assistance, and the educated lay person wanting a deeper understanding of Paul in his historical
context. Such a broad target audience makes one sceptical about the possibilities of success. Yet this dictionary largely accomplishes its task.

By my count, this almost 1000 page dictionary contains 214 articles by 108 scholars treating a broad spectrum of issues related to Paul's letters, thought, and context. A sampling of the article titles portrays the breadth of the contents. In addition to articles on individual letters, the entries include: Chronology; Jesus and Paul; Social-Scientific Approaches to Paul; Abraham; Magic; Peace, Reconciliation; Preaching from Paul Today; Apostasy, Falling Away, Perseverance; Itineraries, Travel Plans, Journeys, Apostolic Parousia; and Elements/Elemental Spirits of the World. Concluding indices of references to Pauline letters by chapter and verse, subjects, and articles make information on almost any Pauline subject or passage easy to find, thereby enhancing the dictionary's usefulness.

Given its sheer size, a thorough analysis of the volume is not possible within the limits of this review. Instead what follows will attempt to assess the strengths and weakness, key features, and overall value of the dictionary.

First, although the six volume Anchor Bible Dictionary is now the standard critical Bible dictionary and an invaluable tool in numerous respects, I find its treatment of Pauline studies to be one of its weakest features. For example, articles on individual letters often devote far too much attention to the search for possible fragments of earlier letters now combined into the canonical letter. The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPL), on the other hand, offers a far more affordable reference tool, with a thorough analysis of Pauline studies and related issues, from what I regard as a more balanced perspective. In addition, its articles contain abundant cross-references both within the text and at its end, plus helpful bibliographies. All of these features combine to make this volume not only easy to use, but helpful as well as a starting
point for further study.

Secondly, I expect an article in a dictionary such as this to provide a reader with an accurate and even-handed introduction to its subject, including an overview of scholarly discussion on contested issues related to that subject and an astute analysis of that debate. Overall, DPL does well in this regard. For example, the articles by James Dunn on Romans, Paul Bowers on Paul's Mission, Frank Thielman on Law, and David Aune on Apocalypticism are all models of judicious scholarship expressed with clarity and conciseness.

Any work of this collaborative nature, however, will be somewhat uneven in this regard. Two examples of poorer quality articles illustrate this point.

First, Ralph Martin's article on "Center of Paul's Theology" should serve as an important article in a dictionary such as this, since this subject has been a focal point of controversy in the study of Paul's theology. Martin, however, offers an inadequate introduction to the subject, followed by an argument for his own thesis that "reconciliation" constitutes the organising centre of Paul's thought. Such a presentation does readers of DPL a great disservice. Likewise, Knox Chamblin's contribution on "Psychology" (dealing with anthropology) largely treats Paul in modern psychological terms. In doing so, he fails to even mention the recent work of scholars such as Jerome Neyrey and Bruce Malina, who have attempted to interpret Paul as a first-century hellenized Jew using tools of sociology and cultural anthropology. Although this work is still in its early stages and therefore stands open to correction, it carries important implications for Chamblin's topic. The articles by Martin and Chamblin stand out, however, precisely because they are exceptions to the overall high quality of the remaining articles.

Third, the publication of E. P. Sanders' seminal volume on Paul and Palestinian Judaism in 1977 changed the course of Pauline studies almost overnight. Sanders questioned standard paradigms for understanding Paul and the Law, and therefore, for a host of related issues (covenant, Israel, etc.) vital for interpreting Paul's theology. It is not an overstatement to say that Pauline scholars (including evangelicals) can largely be categorised according to

their positions on issues defined by Sanders and the debates his work initiated. Within DPL, for example, one could contrast the interpretation of Mosaic Law in the article by James Dunn mentioned above with the treatment of "Works of the Law" by Thomas Schreiner. The editors are to be commended for allowing disagreements among contributors in this post-Sanders era to stand, since such differences accurately reflect the state of Pauline studies at this time. Some evangelicals may be uncomfortable with such disagreement. Yet, the adjective "evangelical" encompasses a wide perspective of viewpoints within a orthodox confessional framework. The reality is that many issues in Pauline studies remain matters of intense debate even among scholars with a high view of Scripture.

In summary, the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters presents the best of evangelical Pauline scholarship collected into one volume. I find no other comparable reference tool. In addition, its content bears witness to the growing maturity of evangelical biblical scholarship. Surely this volume belongs on library shelves throughout the African continent. Both lecturers and students stand to benefit immensely from its use.

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Ralph P. Martin & Peter Daniels, eds.

DICTIONARY OF THE LATER NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS

Leicester, England and Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997

The *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* is the third in a relatively new series of substantial reference works on the New Testament published by Inter-Varsity Press, coming after the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* and the *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*. It covers those areas of the New Testament not dealt with by the earlier works - the Acts of the Apostles, general epistles, Hebrews and Revelation. Unlike the other dictionaries in the series it goes beyond the New Testament itself and deals with developments in the post-apostolic period of early Christian history up to approximately 150 AD. It is a very weighty work: including indexes it contains 1289 pages plus 30 pages of preparatory material, and there are over 230 articles contributed by more than 100 writers. There are helpful Scripture and Subject indexes as well as an Articles index. Each article is followed by a bibliography, some of them very full indeed. The flyleaf lists plaudits from a number of respected New Testament scholars.

It would not be practical to review in detail a book of this length, but a number of general observations may be made. First, the book undoubtedly contains a vast quantity of material and will be a reference work of enormous value to the students and academics for whom it seems to be primarily intended; its accessibility to the preachers, ministers, [and] Christian lay people for whom it was also written is perhaps a little more questionable. There are full discussions of major theological issues, including early church heresies, and a very helpful, concise introduction to New Testament theology. There are thorough introductions to each of the New Testament books covered by the dictionary, and a number of articles cover questions of historical background including, for

example, those on Antioch, Alexandria, the emperor cult and even church architecture. Several others deal with the Jewish background to the literature under discussion. It is pleasing to see an article on 'Early Non-Pauline Mission', as well as one on prayer and another entitled 'Preaching from Acts, Hebrews, General Epistles and Revelation', which contains the not-to-be-missed comment, 'Preachers who bore themselves will almost certainly bore their hearers'! Several articles deal with hermeneutical issues.

Second, there could at times be a greater attempt to synthesise the material presented in order to make the work more user-friendly. Invariably, articles begin with an introduction but very many have no conclusion. In some cases a conclusion may be inappropriate, but sometimes it would be helpful to have a final summing up of the author's major conclusions, especially where the issues raised by an article are contentious. Occasionally, there seems to be a duplication of material. It is not clear why there should be an article entitled 'Theology of the Cross' and another rather longer one on the 'Death of Christ', which covers similar ground. Similarly one might have thought that 'Liturgical Elements' could have been included in 'Worship and Liturgy'. And at times the dictionary format seems to impose a degree of repetition which has the reader hopping here and there through the book. So, there is a general article on 'Christology' as well as separate treatments of 'Christ', 'Logos', 'Christology', 'Lord' and 'Son of God'. Similarly there is an article on the book of Revelation and additional articles on 'Bowls', 'Scrolls and Seals', and 'Trumpets', as well as one entitled 'Beasts, Dragon, Sea Conflict'. The last named is indeed very interesting, although the author fails to define the meaning of Satan's expulsion from heaven by Michael.

Third, while according to the flyleaf the contributors are evangelical, some of the positions espoused may surprise those accustomed to a more traditional understanding of that term. Thus the article on 2 Peter by Richard Bauckham affirms the epistle's pseudepigraphical nature, and that on pseudepigraphy itself, written by J.D.G. Dunn, argues for the existence of 'canonical pseudepigraphy: a practice of 'continuing and developing a literary tradition, begun by an authoritative figure in the past, after his

death'. In a further article, 'Pauline Legacy and School', Dunn maintains Pauline authorship of Colossians but accepts the scholarly consensus that Ephesians was written by 'a disciple of Paul to preserve the heritage of Paul in a form that was of general rather than specific use'. In discussing the Pastoral epistles, far from accepting Pauline authorship, Dunn suggests that 'the Pauline legacy is beginning to be decisively eroded'. However, Michaels maintains the Petrine authorship of I Peter, and Webb that Jude, probably the brother of Christ, wrote the epistle attributed to him. The idea that some New Testament writings may have been pseudepigraphical has traditionally been rejected among evangelicals on the very reasonable grounds that it would raise serious doubts about the truthfulness of the Scriptures. For the present reviewer it is still difficult to reconcile the notion of pseudepigraphy with a high view of the Scriptures' truthfulness.

Fourth, the book responds to certain modern questions. Thus, not just one but two long articles on the gender issue, 'Woman and Man' and 'Women in the Early Church', indicate one of the editors' preoccupations. Both of them take what is, for a reference work of this nature, a surprisingly tendentious approach to the issues under discussion, which diminishes their value as balanced appraisals of a contentious area. If two articles on the subject were really necessary, the editors might at least have invited authors of differing persuasions on the issue to submit them. Typical of the tenor of the articles is the following question begging statement made in 'Woman and Man': 'The step from Jesus' practices to first-century epistles containing household codes was a large one, but it was a cultural accommodation that most early Christians apparently felt necessary in order to survive in a hostile environment.'

Fifth, the extension of the book's coverage beyond the canon of the New Testament does raise disturbing questions. The editors point out that 'Christian thinking did not cease with the last New Testament book, and it developed in those writings usually called the apostolic fathers'. This would of course be true right up to the twentieth century: Christian thinking has not ceased yet. However, the decision to continue beyond the canonical writings and to do so

on the basis stated, does in fact tend to blur the distinction between the canonical and the non-canonical writings (especially in view of the approach taken to the issue of pseudepigrapha), notwithstanding the rather weak disclaimer: 'the term, *Developments*, is not intended to blur the line of demarcation the church has accepted (since Athanasius) between canonical and non-canonical'. Thus in some discussions references to canonical and to non-canonical writings are mixed together, as if they were all of equal status.

This is certainly a very valuable and useful resource. It will no doubt be an essential work of reference, useful both for what it has to say about the later New Testament writings and beyond, and for what it reveals of contemporary scholarly preoccupations. However, it should be used with some caution.

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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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