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Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

CORRUPTION OF THE HEART

An AJET Editorial

The human heart is deceitful and corrupt above all things. This corruption is seen in the way people behave and act, believe and think. Yet responses to a question like, "How corrupt or corrupted is your heart?" will yield relative answers, which are of no value in the kingdom of God.

The first article, by Dr. Keith Ferdinando, is a follow-up *response to Christopher Little's* article which appeared in *AJET* 22.2 2003. Those interested in the issue need to read the original articles which appeared in *AJET* 21.1 2002. Otherwise, the focus in the present article is on a few critical and representative issues only.

In the second article, which is a book chapter printed with permission from the publisher, the author, Dr. Richard J. Gehman, explores the meaning of *Communion with the Dead according to the Scriptures.* He concludes, "'Communion of saints' in Scripture does not refer to any fellowship between the living and the dead. Scripture nowhere suggests that the living and dead fellowship together during Holy Communion. Nor can our unsaved ancestors be included in the body of Christ." (p.14) Believers cannot embrace a communion with the dead if they want to be faithful to the Scriptures. When our loved ones pass away into eternity they have been removed from any communion with the living. This article is well researched; and those involved in theological education need to read the book.

The third one, *Portuguese Presence and Endeavours in East Africa, 1498-1698* is Part I of Prof. Watson A.O. Omulokoli's article (Part II & III will appear in the next issue of *AJET).* It provides background information on the explorations and entrance of Christianity in East Africa by the Portuguese.

The fourth article by Kenneth L. Hall, discusses the importance of *Fighting Corruption in the Human Heart,* which according to Jer. 17:9 is "deceitful above all things, and desperately sick that none can understand it." Hall states correctly that this corruption in the human heart is a sin, which began initially in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Gen. 3:1-6). This inherited sinful nature has been perpetuated in the human race such that when

we become Christians, we do not automatically stop sinning because the inner disposition to sin is still there.

God's standard and expectation of pure living is required of all Christians. Since man is unable to fulfill this standard of righteousness given by God on his own, God himself has provided a solution in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

In providing implications for the modern African church, Hall says Christians, in general, have not allowed the gospel to control every part of their life. This lack of quality Christianity is evidenced by inadequate discipling and syncretism – a mixing of Christian and traditional beliefs (p.57) and other vices. Fighting corruption in the human heart then calls for us to keep our hearts vigilantly, put away crooked speech and pursue a straight path for our feet (Proverbs 4:23-27).

Lastly, *The Formation of African Evangelical Theology* by Dr. Detlef Kapteina takes the reader into the history of African Evangelical theology since 1973. He points out that the late Dr. Byang Kato was instrumental in those early beginnings in addition to the historical framework of AEA structures and earlier awareness of Christian Education concerns (p. 62). His conclusion captures Dr. Kato's emphatic expression: "Let *African* Christians be *Christian* Africans, which lays stress on biblical authenticity and priority for African Christianity. This same expression has continued to be echoed by theologians since then, for example, Dr. P. Bowers' emphasis on the word *Africans,* thus "underlining the necessity of an indigenized Christian theology for Africa." (p. 83)

RESPONDING AGAIN TO CHRISTOPHER LITTLE

Keith Ferdinando

I am grateful to AJET for the opportunity to respond to Christopher Little's *A Rejoinder to Ferdinando's Rebuttal* (AJET 22.2 (2003)). Some background to this exchange may be helpful. It began back in 2000-2001 when Little sent his first article to AJET. In view of its content the editors were willing to print it only on condition that a response should be published at the same time, and they asked me to provide that. At that point AJET readers had the opportunity to study Little's views, read a response, reflect on the merits and demerits of each perspective, and make up their minds. Little, however, was not happy with the outcome and AJET agreed to publish a further article from him—which appeared in 2003—offering me also the opportunity to reply again, which belatedly I now take up. However, I do not propose to try the patience of readers by engaging in another lengthy response and rehearsing in detail arguments made earlier: for those interested in the issue the best approach would certainly be to read the original articles which appeared in AJET 21.1 back in 2002. The focus here will be on a few critical and representative issues only.

First, in his 2003 'Rejoinder' Little reiterates the semi-Pelagian approach which was present in his first article. Early adherents of this position have been described in the following terms: 'They believed that God's help is necessary in order to live the Christian life, but they also believed that we can make the first move on our own. When it comes to righteousness, the sinner is sick, not dead, and the sick man can take the initiative in asking the doctor for help.'[1] In much the same vein Little refers to those 'who do not fulfil the criteria for receiving special revelation from God.'[2] In his view, the operation of God's grace is contingent on the fulfilment of conditions by human beings. Little identifies disagreement with this approach as a manifestation of 'extreme Calvinism', but

Dr. Keith Ferdinando is currently the AIM's Coordinator for Theological Education in Africa. As from October 2006, he will be teaching at the Rwanda Faculty of Evangelical Theology in Kigali, Rwanda. He earned his MA from Oxford University and his BA and PhD in Theology from London Bible College, where he has recently been teaching.

[1] Tony Lane, *The Lion Concise Book of Christian Thought*, Tring, UK: Lion Publishing, 1984, 76.
[2] Christopher Little, 'A Rejoinder to Ferdinando's Rebuttal', *AJET* 22.1 (2003), 45.

it was Paul's view before ever it was Calvin's, that men and women are by nature hostile to God (Rom 8:5-8), dead in their sins and unable to respond to him unless and until he makes them alive with Christ (Eph 2:1-7). Paul insists on the exclusive efficacy of grace in bringing about human salvation: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no-one can boast' (Eph 2:8-9). This is a fundamental issue, and it is not only Calvinists—let alone extreme ones—who recognise the   necessity of God's prevenient grace before any human move towards God becomes possible. 'Grace does not find a man willing, but makes him willing.'[3] Little's argument would seem to restore to Christians the grounds of boasting which Paul denies them: they fulfil the criteria and so become candidates for salvation. In the light of this it is curious that he should then claim to be theocentric in his approach.[4]

Second, while protesting that I misinterpreted his argument, Little still maintains that justice requires that the unevangelised be given access to salvation. 'How can a just God condemn sinners who don't have access to the necessary information to rectify their plight?'[5] The biblical answer to his question is that God justly condemns sinners on the basis of their sin and consequent guilt. Justice does not demand that he make his grace available to anybody at all – nor to everybody. Grace is not about justice, but about totally undeserved favour freely given according to the will of the giver; in other words, the whole point about grace is precisely that it is not justice. If the issue is that of understanding the *basis* on which God accords grace, Paul's doxology at the end of his long discourse in Romans 9-11—in which, among other things, he deals with the issue of free will and election—gives the response: 'Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?"' The tendency of Little's argument is to move salvation away from grace and towards justice and merit: those who fulfil the criteria may thus receive special revelation. However, if Little insists on justice, we are all lost.

Third, and more generally, Little strains biblical texts to find meanings beyond their obvious sense. Two examples will suffice, the first of which is his reference to Abram. Contrary to Little there is at no point in the biblical narrative any suggestion that Abram's call was a result of his 'responding to

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[3] Augustine, *Letters* 186.
[4] Little, 'Rejoinder', 51.
[5] Little, 'Rejoinder', 47.

what he knew to be true about God's will.'[6] There is no indication in the text –
no 'textual clues' anywhere – that Abram had any special knowledge of God or
relationship with him before he was called. 'The history of redemption, like that
of creation, begins with God speaking'[7] – and not with Abram fulfilling any sort
of criteria.

More significantly, in his discussion of Romans 10 Little limits the
application of Paul's series of questions to the Jews: 'How, then, can they call
on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of
whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching
to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How
beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:14-15).
However, while Paul is indeed addressing the situation of the Jewish people in
this chapter, he has just explicitly stated, 'For there is no difference between Jew
and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,
for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"' (Rom 10:12-
13). Paul then goes on to demonstrate the necessity of the proclamation of the
gospel if *anybody* – Jew or Greek – is to call on Christ. 'When one combines
1:18-32 with 10:14-17, it seems fair to conclude that people are not saved apart
from the preaching of the gospel. It is this conviction that has driven the
missionary impulse throughout history.'[8]

Fourth, Little's continued use of the 'conversion' of Constantine to prove
his argument remains bewildering. There are two main questions which he
simply does not address. The first is the extent to which Constantine's
conversion was anything other than a cynical political manoeuvre, the answer to
which will no doubt remain inaccessible as far as the historical record is
concerned. The other is whether Constantine could seriously be regarded as
unevangelised at the time of his supposed response to the vision, ruling as he
was over millions of Christians whose beliefs were scarcely unknown.

Which brings us to a fifth and related point. The way in which Little
clarifies his position raises some puzzlement as to whether he is really saying
anything very significant at all. When he states that God saves the unevangelised
by means of the 'modalities' of special revelation, he includes the normal
regular means by which the gospel is communicated, including preaching or the
passing on of the message through other vehicles such as tradition. This was a

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[6] Little, 'Rejoinder', 49.
[7] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: an Introduction and Commentary*, Leicester: IVP, 1967, 113.
[8] Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998, 568.

baffling point in the first article, where it seemed that he wanted to say that God acts in special ways to reach those beyond such ordinary means of access to the gospel. Of course, God saves by the use of regular human means: Carey pointed this out long ago, and Paul in Romans 10 long before him as we have already noted. What seemed distinctive about Little's argument was the assertion, 'There is great hope for the unevangelized because they have never existed, exist or will exist, without the possibility of finding and knowing God.'[9] This suggests the interposition of supernatural intervention quite independent of human agency on a very large scale indeed. However, it seems that such is not after all Little's case, and in reality he is not as optimistic as his claim seemed to imply. After all, human beings have to fulfil criteria in order to experience 'modalities of special revelation', and we have no idea how many may do so. Moreover, while initially expressing 'great hope' on the basis of his theory, now Little does not want to play 'the numbers game' (his terminology), pointing out that he is only describing a 'possibility'.[10] Accordingly, apart from the worrying semi-Pelagianism embedded in his theology, Christopher Little may not in fact be saying very much at all – which is a good reason to bring this response to a speedy conclusion.

Finally, therefore, Little erroneously implies that he can read the mind of his critic, and that with marked sarcasm. 'Ferdinando evidently *wants* Christians to feel the entire weight of the world on their shoulders. He is *content* in assuming that if redeemed individuals don't share the gospel with the unredeemed then they will be lost' (emphasis added). I am happy to set the record straight regarding what I 'want' and what I am 'content in assuming'. I want Christians to feel the force of the great commission and to respond to it. I want churches to recognise the missionary nature of God and the implications of that for his people, in terms of sacrifice and obedience. I want them to understand that 'if the Holy Spirit is given, a missionary Spirit is given.'[11]
I am worried by approaches such as Little's, whose tendency (which is not to say that this is what Little *wants*) is to undermine the sense of urgency that captivated those like Hudson Taylor, William Carey and Peter Cameron Scott in the past, who left their homes and countries to bring the gospel to unreached masses of humanity. That sense of urgency is already being lost in many of the churches of the West; it would be a tragedy if Western theological speculation should now undermine the growing missionary vision and energy of African

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[9] Christopher Little, 'Towards Solving the Problem of the Unevangelised', *AJET* 21.1 (2002), 57.
[10] Little, 'Rejoinder', 61.
[11] Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles*, London : Lutterworth Press, 1968, 43.

churches and believers just as the centres of gravity of world Christianity move to the South. We are summoned not to engage in unsupported conjecture about ways in which God may or may not reach the unevangelised in addition to the means he has clearly and explicitly identified, but to ensure that they do not remain unevangelised precisely by taking the gospel to them. We can be sure of this: while there may perhaps be striking exceptions to the norm of regular mission, a possibility that Calvin himself admits,[12] they would nevertheless be just that – striking exceptions, for the biblical testimony is that God has ordained human messengers as the means by which the gospel should be communicated to men and women. Mission responds to the 'problem of the unevangelised'. I conclude with Packer's response to approaches not so very dissimilar to that of Christopher Little:

> We may safely say (i) if any good pagan reached the point of throwing himself on his Maker's mercy for pardon, it was grace that brought him there; (ii) God will surely save anyone he brings thus far (cf Acts 10:34f; Rom. 10:12f); (iii) anyone thus saved would learn in the end that he was saved through Christ. But what we cannot safely say is that God ever does save anyone this way. We simply do not know.[13]

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[12] John Calvin (trans. Ross Mackenzie; ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance), *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, 231.
[13] James Packer quoted by Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: the Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission*, Downers Grove and Leicester: Apollos and IVP, 2001, 322.

CONTRIBUTORS INVITED FOR *AJET*

The Editorial Committee for *AJET* (a journal that facilitates theological reflection and research by evangelicals on theological issues throughout the continent of Africa) welcomes articles by evangelical scholars for publication. Such articles will be screened based on the following criteria:

Theology: Since *AJET* publishes theological reflection based on the authority of Scripture articles submitted for publication should reflect an evangelical perspective.

Relevance: Articles should be relevant to the African Christian church today. Topics may deal with a range of issues, including theology, African church history, practical theology, theological reflection on problems in the church due to traditional African culture or contemporary society, theological and Christian education in the African context and other similar topics.

Scholarship: Articles should reflect serious scholarship based on library or field research. Bibliographic references should preferably be no less than ten. The English composition should be accurate and readable, without the need for extensive editing.

Format: Articles should be typewritten, double-spaced with bibliographic information (of every book used) at the end of the article. Footnotes or End Notes should be properly given, following guidelines of scholarly publications.

Biographic Information Requested: Authors should include a brief biographic sketch of their present vocational work, together with the last degree obtained and name of the institution from which the degree was obtained.

COMMUNION WITH THE DEAD ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES*

Richard J. Gehman

Many Christian theologians in Africa have suggested that the Christian church needs to develop a theology which will provide a substitute for the traditional belief in the living-dead. Since the Africans have been very near to their ancestors, they say, we need to ensure that they continue to feel near to them. Therefore, we are being told, we need to enable the Christians to continue a sense of fellowship with their departed loved ones. This fellowship with the dead is what the Christian church has defined as the "Communion of Saints." Included in this is fellowship in prayer. What these theologians are doing is reviving a Roman Catholic theology of the "Communion of Saints" and prayers for the dead in the form of an African Christian Theology.

All Christians, who testify to their Christian faith by saying the Apostles' Creed, declare, "I believe…in the communion of saints." But what does this mean? What does the Bible teach concerning "the communion of saints"? Unfortunately, these theologians follow the old Roman Catholic tradition rather than the Scriptures, as we shall see.

"The Communion of Saints"

The Meaning in the Apostles' Creed

The phrase, "communion of saints," is not taken from the Scriptures but from the Apostles' Creed. The final form of the Apostles' Creed took many centuries to develop. The phrase, "communion of saints," is absent from the writings of the early church fathers, nor is it found in the African Creed nor the

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* This article is printed from Dr. Richard Gehman's book: *Who are the living dead* (ISBN 9966-20-088-6) with permission from Evangel Publishing House, PvtBag 28963, Nairobi, Kenya.

Main Interpretations of the Phrase: There are two main opinions of what the phrase means. Most believe that this is a communion with persons ("saints" in English). Pannenberg believes that the original meaning was "communion with holy martyrs" (Pannenberg 1972:149). The stated purpose in writing about the suffering and death of Perpetua and Felicitas was to help the readers have "communion with the holy martyrs, and through them with Jesus Christ" (Pannenberg 1972:153).

Others, however, believe it is a communion with "holy things," that is, the sacraments (Holy Communion and Baptism). They point to the Latin word, *sancta,* which is neuter inform. They believe this refers to the impersonal meaning of participation in the "holy things." Benko believes that the phrase refers to the forgiveness of sins which is granted by taking Holy Communion (Benko 1964).

Karl Barth says that the meaning of the phrase is unclear, having both a personal and impersonal meaning. Therefore Barth things the phrase refers both to the communion of persons and the communion with God through baptism and Holy Communion.

Roman Catholic Interpretation: The primary meaning found among Roman Catholics is "the spiritual union existing between each Christian and Christ, and so between each and every Christian, whether in Heaven ... in purgatory ..., or on earth" (Cross 1958:320).

Origen taught that love was the chief virtue and should mark the care of all members within the church. Not only does this apply to the living but also to the departed saints. "We must hold that the saints who have fallen asleep before us exercise it towards those who are struggling in this life much more than do they who are compassed about [surrounded] with human weakness and are struggling in company with feebler folk" (Quilton 1954:195). He reasons that if the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents, so do the saints who have fallen asleep. His support is quotations from the Apocrypha (Tobit 12:12; 3:16, 17).

Pope Leo XII defined the Communion of Saints in his encyclical on the Eucharist in 1902 with these words:

> As everyone knows, the communion of saints is nothing else but a mutual
> sharing in help, satisfaction, prayer and other good works, a mutual
> communication among all the faithful, whether those who have reached

heaven, or who are in the cleansing fire (purgatory), or who are still pilgrims on the way in this world. For all these are common together to form one living city whose Head is Christ, and whose law is love (Lawlor 1967:vol.4, 41).

Protestant Interpretation: The Protestant Reformers broke away from the Roman Catholic teaching of the saints and prayers to the dead. The Reformers believed that the Communion of Saints in the Apostles' Creed was an expansion of the preceding phrase, "the Holy Catholic Church." They limited the "communion" to the fellowship between believers and Christ and fellowship between Christians living upon the earth. This is reflected in the Protestant creeds and catechisms. For example, The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 affirms that,

> All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship [communion] with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, pubic and private, as do conduce [contribute] to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man (Schaff 1882:vol.3, 659).

The Heidelberg Catechism of the Lutheran Church in 1516 says something similar (Schaff 1882:vol.3, 325). Therefore, it is no surprise that the Protestant commentaries are silent on any communion of saints with departed believers. The sharing is among the living and not between the living and the dead.

An Anglican Interpretation: Although very many (perhaps the majority) within the worldwide Anglican Communion regard themselves as Protestants, there are some in the Anglican Church who believe in fellowship between the living and the dead. Such an Anglican was Swete, who argued,

> Spiritual fellowship based upon union with God in Christ cannot be terminated [ended] by physical death. If 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life...shall be able to separate us from the love of God,' (Romans 8:38f), it is reasonable to believe also that the accident of death cannot separate us from fellowship with those who have gone before (unless death is followed by a suspension of consciousness) (Swete 1915:210).

Since prayer is the chief means of fellowship between Christians separated by long distances, Swete argues, "there seems to be no reason why this kind of fellowship should not exist between the living and the departed. It is natural to suppose that departed Saints remember in their prayers those whom they knew on earth, and that those who are still on earth can return the benefit" (Swete 1915:210).

New Testament Teaching

Although the phrase, "the communion of saints," is not found in the Bible, both "communion" and "saints" are biblical terms. What does the scripture teach concerning "communion" among the saints"?

Communion *(koinonia):* *Koinonia* occurs twenty times in the Greek New Testament. This word carries the idea of "participation" and "fellowship," a specially close bond. There is a two-way relationship of giving and receiving in communion.

Koinonia is defined by Bauer in four ways: "(1) Association, communion, fellowship, close relationship; (2) Generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism; (3) Abstract for the concrete sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, event gift, contribution; (4) Participation, sharing in something" (Bauer 1979:*ad loc.*).

As we look at the ways *koinonia* is used in the New Testament we may divide them into two groups: fellowship is either with the living saints or with God.

Fellowship with God is a common emphasis (I Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 2:1; 3:10; I John 1:3b, 6). In the Old Testament a *koinonia* kind of fellowship was never used of our relationship with God. The emphasis among the Hebrews was the holiness and majesty of God. He is high and separated from creation and especially from sinners. The nearness of God was never thought of in terms of *koinonia.* It is distinctively Christian (a New Testament emphasis, not an Old Testament teaching) for John to say, "...that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3). This close relationship of giving and receiving, this unity of spirit and participation in sharing, is with one another and with the Father and the Son.

There can be no *koinonia* fellowship with man apart form the primary fellowship with God. The Bible teaches that our communion (fellowship) with the saints depends on our communion with God. Unless God has forgiven our sins and reconciled us (brought us together) with Him, there can be no real *koinonia* between men and women.

But there is no evidence that those who developed the Apostles' Creed had fellowship with God in mind when they referred to the "Communion of Saints." Nor has the Christian church related the "Communion of Saints" in the Apostles' Creed to our communion with God (Swete 1915:170).

Koinonia is used with reference to Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). By taking the bread and cup we participate in the body and blood of the Lord. The communion is personal, with the Lord. through the taking of the material elements of Holy Communion. For these reason we consider this Scripture along with our first category of communion with God.

It is during Holy Communion that the living saints are brought close together with their Lord. As the believers hear the Word of God preached, as they pray and as they share in the Lord's Supper. there is both the inward experience and the outward manifestation of the Communion of Saints. Our communion with the saints is based on our communion with the Lord.

The great emphasis of *koinonia* in the New Testament, however, is on fellowship between living believers, who are united together because they are "in Christ" (I John 1:3, 7). This fellowship is shown by giving material gifts to help the poor and needy. We share with believers our deep unity in Christ by sharing with them our material things (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Philippians 1:5; Hebrews 13:16). "An isolated life, self-contained, wholly occupied with personal interests, even though they be the highest interests of the individual soul, is far removed from the life of the Spirit of Christ" (Swete 1915:194).

Indeed, this *koinonia* was one of the chief characteristics of the early church, along with the apostles' teaching, breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). The right hand of fellowship was extended to Paul by the other apostles when they recognised the grace of God at work in and through him (Galatians 2:9). Sharing in the faith of a brother is rightfully expected (Philemon 6).

Koinonia refers to a brotherly unity, a mutual sharing among those who share Christ in common. It is "used specially of the closest of all human relationships, e.g. marriage contract" (Moulton 1949:*ad loc.*) Thus Paul says that light and darkness can have no fellowship together (2 Corinthians 6:14). Fellowship is very Christian, beginning with our close, personal relationship with Christ, and then moving beyond to all our fellow believers who have all been baptised into one Body through the new birth.

There is absolutely no hint in the Scriptures, however, of a koinonia with the dead. Whatever we may hold in common with the dead, however much we may believe that the unity of the Body of Christ includes those in the next life, *koinonia* is not the proper word to use in reference to our relationship with the dead. *Koinonia* refers to practical sharing, communication and mutual interdependence. There is a conscious exercise of fellowship. Nowhere in Scripture do we find any favourable attitude towards a conscious, active relationship with the dead.

Saints: The other word, "saints" (*hagioi*), refers to those human beings who are consecrated to God. In the New Testament all Christians are saints, as we have seen, because they have been declared righteous by grace through faith in Christ.

Communion of Saints refers to that bond which unites all true, living believers in Christ. Born-again Christians may be members of different churches, each with a different theology and history. But eh Communion of Saints is a bond which goes deeper than membership of a particular denomination. Church membership is important and may be a partial, visible expression of the Communion of Saints. But the Communion of Saints is more than church membership. For it unites all those who know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Conclusion

We conclude that the Communion of saints in Scripture does not refer to any fellowship between the living and the dead. Scripture nowhere suggests that the living and dead fellowship together during Holy Communion. Nor can our unsaved ancestors be included in the Body of Christ, as we shall see later in our study.

The Roman Catholic Church, by emphasising tradition above Scripture, continues to err. Only by returning to the simple teaching of the Word of God

can we find what the Communion of Saints really means in the Christian church. The liberal Protestants have also fallen into error by rejecting the authority of Scripture. There simply is no biblical basis whatsoever for including the unsaved ancestors with the living in the Communion of Saints. The final state of an individual's relationship with God is decided at the time of his or her death. No prayers on behalf of the dead, no taking a part in Holy Communion, can possibly bring about change. Only faith in Christ during this life can reconcile man with God.

Prayers for and by the Dead

Prayers for and by the dead cannot be separated from the subject of the "Communion of Saints." Every major study on the Communion of Saints includes a discussion on prayers. We need to turn our attention to this question now.

If we try to support prayers for and by the dead in church tradition, then we will find much evidence. The Christians in the second century after Christ, suffering from Roman persecution, found shelter and places of worship in the Roman catacombs (tunnels underground where Christians buried their dead and worshipped in secret). Hidden in these caves, under the earth, they wrote prayers on the walls for their dead loved ones. Tertullian in AD 211 was the first church father and theologian to mention prayers for the dead in public. At that time Christians prayed for their dead on the anniversary of their death. By the fourth century "the evidence is universal and abundant." Augustine in the fifth century defended the practice, referring to 2 Maccabees 12:43 and the customs of the church. Not until AD 1234 at the Council of Lyons did the church make any official statement on the subject. They said that the living could help the souls in purgatory through prayers (Wright 1967:672f).

But if one seeks to support prayers for and by the dead from the Scriptures, this becomes very difficult. Swete, a Bible scholar from the Church of England in another generation, believed that prayer was the chief means of fellowship between the living and the dead. He supported this by referring to 2 Maccabees 15:12f.

But he continues, "The New Testament has no exact counterpart, but the prophet of the Apocalypse sees the souls of the martyrs interceding with God for the speedy punishment of the persecutors of the Church (Revelation 6:9f). IN the ancient church it was a widespread opinion, if not an article of faith, that the

dead in Chris to pray for the living" (Swete 1915:221). He then quoted various church fathers. Can the living pray for the dead? He asks.

> Are we at liberty to remember the dead before God, as the dead, we believe, remember the living? Can there be between us the fellowship of reciprocal prayer? The Biblical evidence is slight. According to 2 Maccabees, Judas Maccabacus provided for the offering of sacrifices for the good estate of the souls of certain Jews who had fallen in battle for their country (Swete 1915:222f).

Wright, in the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia,* States that the only passage in the New Testament which teaches prayers for the dead is 2 Timothy 1:18. He admits, there is "no indication of prayers for the dead" in the writings of the early church fathers. Not until the second century do we find Christians writing in the catacombs, praying of their dead loved ones (Wright 1967:672f).

Possible Support in the Bible

2 Timothy 1:18 is the only New Testament Scripture used to support prayers for the dead. Does this really give support, as the Roman Catholics and some in the Church of England claim? Are theologians in Africa really fair in using this verse to teach that Christians may pray for their dead loved ones?

Onesiphorus was to ashamed of Paul when he was in prison (1:16f). This seems to imply that Onesiphorus was not present with Paul in prison at the time Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. The deeds of Onesiphorus are placed in the past tense (the Greek aorist). This could mean that he had died and was therefore unable to continue helping Paul. Alford concludes, "it has been not improbably supposed, that Onesiphorus himself was o longer living at that time" (Alford 1873:vol.3, *ad loc.*). Therefore, when Paul prays for Onesiphorus in 1:18, it is said that he must have been praying for a dead person.

But there are good reasons which lead many others to believe that Onesiphorus was still living at the time of this letter. .

(1)   Nowhere does Paul say that Onesiphorus had died. If he had died recently as a faithful Christian witness, it seems strange that Paul says nothing of this.

(2)   Paul greets the household of Onesiphorus and not Onesiphorus himself. This, hoever, may simply mean that Onesiphorus was not present at the time. There is no need to think that Onesiphorus must have died. Perhaps he had been

arrested in Rome and put in prison for helping Paul. Or perhaps Paul knew that Onesiphorus was somewhere else and had not yet returned home. In any case we do not need to conclude that Onesiphorus had died by this time.

(3) Paul prays for the household of Onesiphorus and not for Onesiphorsu in 1:16. This may simply mean that his whole family helped in the ministry. They had all agreed for the had of the home to risk his life in showing kindness to Paul, who was accused of a capital crime. Therefore, Paul prayed for God's mercy to be shown to the whole family.

(4) The use of the past tense in 1:16f may only mean that Onesiphorus no longer had Roan permission to visit Paul. The Apostle was in chains (1:16), a condition much worse than his first imprisonment (Acts 28:16-31). His death was near at hand (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Therefore, Paul believed that the kind acts of mercy which were shown to him by Onesiphorus could no longer be continued. We do not need to conclude that Onesiphorus was dead.

(5) If Onesiphorus had in fact died recently, it seems strange that Paul does not offer sympathy to his family. Why would Paul not comfort the family?

(6) The final reason for believing that Onesiphorus was still living at this time is the teaching of the rest of Scripture. Nowhere else does Paul pray for the dead. Nowhere else within the holy canon of scripture do we find any prophet or apostle praying for the dead. When a Scripture is open to various interpretations, we cannot read into it some new doctrine. Scripture interprets Scripture. Albert Barnes goes so far as to say that verse 18 "proves that Onesiphorus was then alive, as Paul would not offer prayer for him if he were dead" (Barnes n.d.,*ad loc.*).

Possible Support from the Apocrypha

Because the Scriptures do not teach prayers for the dead, those who believe we can pray for the dead use the Apocryphal writings, especially 2 Maccabees. Charles claims, "The later popularity of 2 Maccabees is due as much to the support found in it by the Roman Church for dogmas [teaching] like prayers for the dead (12. 43, 45) and the intercession [prayers] of the saints (15.11-16) as to the martyr-stories or the miraculous and legendary incidents" (Charles 1913:vol.1, 131). Let us now look at 2 Maccabees 12:39-45.

A summary of the story found in this passage is as follows:

Judas Maccabeus, after the victory over Gorgias who was governor of Idumea in 163 BC, returned after battle to take up the bodies of a "few of the Jews" who had been killed in battle. They discovered under their coats "sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear." Then they realised that they had died in battle because of idolatry. They then collected 2,000 drachmas of silver to send to Jerusalem for "a sin offering." The conclusion is found in verse 45. "There fore, he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."

Metzger observes that "This is the first known statement of the doctrine that a sin offering and prayer made atonement for the sins of the dead (verse 45)" (Metzger 1965:287).

The problem with this story found in the Apocrypha is that it teaches more than the Roman Catholics teach. While it is one of the few passages which theologians can quote to support prayer for the dead, it is not orthodox teaching, even by Roman catholic standards. For the prayers and sin offering were made for those who had committed idolatry. Idolatry in Roman Catholic theology is a mortal sin. Bartlett suggests that these "idols" were actually amulets, "worn as a protective charm, and probably bearing a representation of dagon of Azotus" (Bartlett 1973:319). Even though these Jews had died in idolatry, a sin offering was made for them because they had died for the cause of the Maccabees. The Maccabean Jews believed that those who died fighting on their side would be raised from the dead to share in the kingdom which was to replace the Syrian rule. The sin offering was intended to free the dead of their sin of idolatry so that they too could share in that kingdom.

But the Roman Catholic Church teaches that it is unlawful to pray for those who die in mortal sin. To pray for those in purgatory is an honourable practice, but to pray for those in hell is unlawful and useless. Because these Jews were guilty of idolatry, a mortal sin, it was unlawful to pray for them. Therefore, this example is not only contrary to the Jewish laws of the rabbis (Goldstein 1983:450) but is also contrary to official Roman Catholic teaching.

Several other references are mentioned to support prayers for and by the dead. In the Book of Baruch we read, "For thou sittest as king forever, and we perish forever. O Lord Almighty, thou God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the dead Israelites, and the children..." (Book of Baruch 3:3f). In 2 Maccabees 15:12f Judas Maccabeus had a dream in which he saw Onias III and Jeremiah praying. "Catholics...have taken Judas, vision as a factual proof from Scripture

of the doctrine that the souls of the dead saints may pray for the living" (Goldstain 1983:498).

However, such teaching in the Apocrypha cannot support prayers for the dead among evangelical protestants. For the Apocrypha was never part of the Old Testament canon of the Jews. Evidence indicates that the Lord Jesus accepted the Old Testament canon of the Jews. Though He frequently quoted from the three parts of the Jewish Scriptures, namely, "the Law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44, He never referred to any of the apocryphal writings. Therefore, because Jesus and the Jews rejected the Apocrypha as being part of the canon of Old Testament Scripture, so do evangelical Protestants. The Apocrypha, and especially 2 Maccabees, is, unlike the Bible, filled with historical and doctrinal errors.

For these reasons the Protestant reformers rejected all belief in prayers for and by the dead. The confessions of faith for the Calvinists (Schaff 1882:vol.3, 647), the Lutherans (Schaff 1882:vol.3, 26) and the Church of England (Schaff 1882:vol.3, 26) all oppose prayers to, for or by the dead. However, the Church of England was slower to give up public prayers for the dead. Finally in the year 1552 the Church of England removed all prayers to the dead from the Book of Prayers. Praying for the dead is now left to the conscience of each individual Anglican. Today various Anglican clergy, possibly mainly from the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church, support these prayers for the dead.

Conclusion

The fact is that prayers for the dead were not introduced into the liturgy of Christian church services until the darkness of the Middle Ages had set in. Even Swete, who supports the practice of praying for the dead, admits this. He says that prayers for the dead have had a harmful influence on the church. Such prayers have "opened the door to the devotions which are practically a return to a form of polytheism" (Swete 1915:242).

Despite these facts, various theologians in Africa recommend that we return to the Roman Catholic tradition in order to preserve something of value in the African traditional culture. To introduce the African ancestors into Christianity by this means is to repeat the Roman Catholic error of the Middle Ages.

The Batak church is a younger church, and like many churches in Africa, the fruit of missionary effort in the 19th century. In 1951 the Batak church wrote

their own Confession of Faith. Should we not have the same courage as they did when they wrote Article 16? It reads as follows:

> We believe and confess: Men are destined to die, but after that the will be a Judgment. Then they rest fro their work. Jesus Christian is the Lord of the living and the dead. When we thus remember the dead, then we remind ourselves of our own death and put our hope on the communion of believers with God and thus strengthen our hearts in our struggle in this life.

> With this doctrine we refute and reject the heathenish concept which teaches that the souls of the dead have influence on the living, as well as the doctrine which teaches that the soul of a dead person remains in the grave. We refute and reject also the doctrine of the Roman Catholics which teaches that there is a purgatory which must be experienced in order to purify the souls of the dead and to win eternal life, and that man may conduct a mass to intercede for the dead so that they come out of the purifying life earlier. We refute and reject the practice of praying to the souls of the saints and the hope that power or holiness may come from the dead (from their graves, from their clothes, their bones, mementos, relics) Leith 1963:565).

Prayers With the Dead

If the Bible does not teach that we can pray to or for the dead, can be pray *with* the dead, that is, believing that they are conscious of our prayers? Does the Bible teach that the dead can see the living and follow their activities with interest? Can the dead saints look down from heaven, watching men and women receive Christ as their Lord and saviour, and observe Christians running their race? If so, some suggest that the living can be in the conscious presence of the dead, praying *with* them, in their presence, knowing that the dead are watching whatever they do.

While the Bible is largely silent on this question, some Christians try to find support from a few passages that may suggest that the dead can observe all that takes place on earth.

Luke 15:10

Jesus finished his parable about the lost coin by saying, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." If angels rejoice over the conversion of sinners, some would say,

this means that they know what is taking place on earth. What of the Christian saints in heaven? Can they do the same?

Hebrews 12:1

The Bible verses most often quoted are from the book of Hebrews. The write of Hebrews observes, "since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses..." (12:1). The figure of speech is that of a great stadium in which sporting events took place during Roman times. After the athletes finished their races, they joined those watching the games as the last runners finished their races. Form this figure of speech some think that the saints in heaven sit as spectators, watching the Christians running their race. But the meaning of Scripture is not always what it appears to be at first.

The important word is "witness" *(marturon)*. A "witness" is one who can testify to what he has seen or heard or knows by any other means (Thayer 1983:*ad loc.*). The verb form, *martureo,* means "to be a witness, to bear witness, testify, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or herd or experienced something" (Thayer 1983:*ad loc.).* Westcott states that "There is apparently no evidence that *martus* [witness] is ever used simply in the sense of 'spectator'" (Westcott 1955:391). "The normal word" used in Greek for "onlooker" is *epoptes* and this word is not found here. Therefore, we can find no word here to suggest that the saints in heaven are watching the living on earth.

To suggest that this Scripture teaches that the dead can witness or watch the living is to miss the whole point of the passage: The living are called upon to look on the example of the departed "... by their loyalty and endurance they have born witness to the possibilities of the life of faith" (Bruce 1964:346). "It would seem nearer the correct interpretation here to think of these first century readers running their Christian race, not having in mind the witness of 11:4-40 as spectators, but rather their testimony as examples urging them on to faith in the Messiah as High Priest (Wuest 1948:213).

In Hebrews 11 we read of the lives of believers who successfully completed their earthly life and are now resting in heaven. "It is what we see in them, not what they see in us, that is the writer's main point" (Moffatt 1924:193). The example of those who have gone before us should stir us on to complete our race in the same manner. The emphasis in 12:1 is on the living believers gaining inspiration to persevere in their faith by looking upon the examples of the departed saints. Our gaze is directed backward in time to their lives in the past, rather than directed to the saints watching us now from heaven. The passage

does not teach that the dead look upon the living. "There seems no Scripture in proof that departed saints are spectators of our conflicts..." (Moll 1868:vol.22, 233).

Hebrews 12:22f

Sometimes reference is made to these verses, which read, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirit of righteous men made perfect..."

This is a great biblical passage speaking of the whole Church of Jesus Christ, which includes the living and the dead saints. But it does not teach a conscious, living fellowship between the living and the dead. What it teaches is the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant.

The New Testament Hebrew Christians "have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire" (Hebrews 12:18). This brought fear to the Old Testament saints. But the New Testament believers "have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (12:22). The Old Testament experiences were illustrations (types or parables) for the Christian church. That which was material in the Old Testament is spiritualised in the New Testament. The writer of Hebrews cannot mean literally that we have come to Mount Zion which can be touched with our hands. But in a spiritual sense, we have been made citizens of heaven. "You have come...to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven..." (12:22f).

The phrase, "you have come," means that we have been admitted into the Holy Catholic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ, through faith in Christ. IT refers to the conversion experience with all the rights and privileges this brings. Because we have been saved and made members of the Body of Christ we have become members of the great family of God which includes "the spirits of righteous men made perfect" (12:23). The Church of Jesus Christ is undivided by death. Both the living and the dead saints are one in Christ. "It is, of course, to meant that they are VISIBLE but that they are seen by the eye of faith. The ARGUMENT here is, that as in virtue of the Christian revelation, we become associated with those pure and happy spirits, we should not apostasize from such a religion..." (Barnes 1855:316). There is no reference here to communication or fellowship with the dead, in their presence. We cannot find any idea here that

we can pray *with* the dead, believing that they are watching us or helping us in any way.

I Corinthians 15:29

How desperate can theologians become? For lack of clear teaching, they search for anything which they might use as biblical support. Wanting to find support in the Scriptures, theologians sometimes refer to 1 Corinthians 15:29. "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptised for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised for them?" This is a very unclear text without any clear interpretation. To base a doctrine on such a verse is like building a house on sand.

There have been more than 36 different interpretations of this text (Robertson 1963:*ad loc.*). A.T. Robertson says that "This passage remains a puzzle" (Robertson 1931:vol.4, 192). Grosheide states that 15:29 "is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. Interpretations abound but no one has succeeded in giving an interpretation which is generally accepted" (Grosheide 1955:371).

We simply do not know enough background to the practice of baptising for the dead to make a proper interpretation. The is no information about baptism for the dead in any other New Testament writing. "We have absolutely no information about this practice" (Murphy-O'Connor 1979:144). We know nothing of such a practice in the early church and should not read a second century heresy into the first century church. The readers of this letter knew what Paul meant, but we do not.

When the meaning of a biblical text is so unclear, then theological beliefs and tendencies can enter into the interpretation of the text. And this is what these liberal theologians have done who desire to find a biblical basis for their belief that the living can affect the eternal destiny of the dead. For a more careful study of this text, see the End Note.

Conclusion

There is no place in Scripture where we find any teaching that the living can influence the dead or that the dead can pray for and help the living. Nor do we find any support for the idea that the living can fellowship with the dead or enjoy a personal, conscious communion with them.

Death is difficult not only for the dying but also for those who are left. The dying fear the unknown. They are unsure of their destiny. The living grieve over the loss of fellowship with a friend or loved one which they had enjoyed.

So it is natural that many peoples in many cultures have tried to maintain a living relationship with the dead. But God in His wisdom has closed the door. Fellowship between the dead and the living is broken. Wishful thinking cannot change that.

End Note

Baptising "for the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:29).

First, let us consider the context. In chapter 15 Paul teaches the doctrine of resurrection. He gives various arguments in support of the resurrection. But in verse 29 there is a sudden change. Instead of saying that God has revealed this to him, he adds in verses 29 and 30 two further arguments in support of the resurrection. The first words of verse 29, "Now if," (*epei*, "otherwise") point back to verse 20. (Verses 21-28 speak about something else – a digression.) Paul is thus saying, "If there is no resurrection of the dead..."

Verse 29 then speaks of a practice of Corinth which seems to contradict those who deny the resurrection of the dead. "What will they gain," Those who baptise for the dead, if there is no resurrection of the dead? "The question implies that they will be in an absurd and piteous state. We might render, 'what will be the position of those who receive baptism for the dead?' "(Robertson 1963:359).

In verse 29 there are three key words: "baptised," "dead" and "for." Though some think this verse speaks of spiritual death, the context would suggest a physical death. For he has been speaking of a bodily resurrection from the dead. "Baptism" should also be taken in the normal sense. Whether it refers to Christian baptism or non-Christian baptism, the essential meaning remains the same.

The preposition, "for" (*huper*), can mean a variety of things. This could mean "over." Some interpreters take "for" in this sense, that people baptised "over" the graves of the dead as an expression of the unity and communion in Christ with the dead (Grosheide 1955:373).

Huper could also mean "in the place of, instead of, in the name of" (Bauer 1979:*ad loc.*). In this case Paul speaks of vicarious baptism, someone being

baptised in the place of another. This opinion is held by many (e.g., Conzelmann 1975:275; Craig 1953:vol. 10, 240).

What strengthens this meaning is the fact that this is the "normal" meaning of the word. And in later church history the church fathers refer to "vicarious baptism" of heretics. Chrysostom, for example, says this was a custom of the Marionites.

> When any Catechumen departs (this life) among them, having concealed the living man under the couch of the dead; they approach the corpse, and talk with him, and ask him if he wishes to receive baptism; then, when he makes no answer, he that is concealed underneath saith in his stead, that of course he should wish to be baptized; and thus they baptize him instead of the departed one (Conzelmann 1975:276).

While this was a common interpretation in the 1500s, John Calvin rejected it because he said this made no sense. Those who would baptise someone vicariously would surely believe in the resurrection. Yet in 1 Corinthians 15:29 these people seem not to have believed in the resurrection. More than this, if someone were practicing such baptism, Paul would have corrected such a superstitious practice. The apostle often corrected the Corinthians when they erred. Why did he not correct this error if this was really vicarious baptism?

Instead, Calvin suggests that baptism here refers to normal Christian baptism, not a corruption of it. He suggests *huper* means "as." Those baptised here were on their deathbeds and thought to be "as" dead. Because of their near death, they were baptised. Or, if a catechumen were sick, he would ask for baptism before his death in order to gain something. We do know that Christians in later days waited until their death to be baptised in order to be purified from all their sins.

This reasonable-sounding interpretation has only one problem: it is doubtful whether we can be fair by translating *huper* with the word "as." Neither Bauer, nor Liddel and Scott, nor Kittel menton "as" for one of the meanings of this Greek word.

This word *huper* ("for"), not only means substitution but "with reference to." Some suggest that the living who lost their Christian loved ones ended up believing in Christ and were baptised with the view of being re-united with their loved ones after death.

Such differing interpretations could be multiplied three dozen times. We simply do not know. Yet we are continually drawn back to what seems to be the plain meaning of the text, that some people were being baptised "on behalf of the dead." F.F. Bruce says that "baptism by proxy" is the natural meaning of the text (Bruce 1976:148). Riesenfeld, in his word study in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, notes:

> In all probability the word has the representative sense in Paul's saying about baptism for the dead . ... None of the attempts to escape the theory of a vicarious baptism in primitive Christianity seems to be wholly successful. If one thus presupposes that there may be baptism 'for the dead,' this implies that the dead, probably relatives, were unbaptized at death. We thus have a kind of substitution even if, as one may suppose, the candidate was baptized for himself as well as with respect to someone who had died unbaptized (Riesenfeld 1972:vol.8, 512f).

If we accept this interpretation, we are then faced with the question whether this practice was approved by the apostle Paul and the Corinthian church, or whether it was a corruption f Christian baptism.

Some do not hesitate in believing that he Corinthians had "a magical view of the sacraments" (Conzelmann 1975:276). Others suggest that this vicarious baptism might be similar to prayers for the dead. Baptism for the dead and prayers for the dead are survivals of "a spirit of fellowship, of unity, and of solidarity in the community." They "do reflect a kindly, generous and Christian spirit on the part of those on earth in the desire for the continued and increasing well-being of those who have passed beyond the veil" (Craig 1953:vol.10, 240).

Others who accept the vicarious meaning of the phrase recognise that this has pagan overtones. So they believe this is a corruption or perversion of Christian baptism. Many suggest that although Paul did not approve of it, he based his argument on their practice.; While he did not approve of baptism for the dead, Paul points out that his practice assumes that there is a resurrection of the dead. Baptism for the dead is not consistent with a denial of a bodily resurrection (Buswell 1962:vol.2, 337; Murphy O'Connor 1979:144).

Morris points out that in other places Paul does build his reasoning on a practice which he opposes. For example 1 Corinthians 8:10 "where he refers to sitting at meat in an idol's temple without showing it to be wrong in itself, though he believed this, is clear from 10:21ff" (Morris 1958:218).

Paul does seem to separate himself from the practice of baptising for the dead. Paul asks the question, "what will *those do...*?" Though Paul does not condemn the practice, he does separate himself from those who teach it. The Greek phrase for the words, "those...who are baptised," does speak of a particular group separated from the rest of the Christians (Barrett 1968:*ad loc.*).

After we examine all the possibilities we must conclude that we do not really know what Paul meant by this verse. Any theology which uses such a text to support its belief will not stand the test of time. Paul did write the verse, but what he meant is uncertain.

We can be sure, however, that the apostle Paul did not support a practice which is contrary to the Word of God. God's Word reveals that the destiny of the dead is settled at the time of their death. The living cannot pray for the dead in an effort to change their eternal destiny. The living must not try to communicate with the dead. Once a man dies, he has passed through the veil and has no further chance to repent and be saved. The living cannot effect any change in the future of the dead, either through prayers or through a baptism for the dead.

Conclusion

Many peoples on all the continents and from time immemorial have maintained a living relationship with the dead through oblations and prayers. Throughout church history there has been a tendency for Christians to compromise their biblical faith by continuing with this practice of communing with the dead.

After the Roman Emperor Constantine gave official recognition to Christianity in AD 313, large numbers entered the Christian Church through baptism. They brought with them many pagan practices. Innocent memorial services for the martyrs, which were practiced in the second and third centuries, gradually changed into a cult of the dead so that Christians began praying to and for the dead. Cultural traditions played a great role in shaping doctrine and practice than biblical teaching.

Protestant theologians in Africa have latched onto the Roman Catholic approach to the dead and have gone even further by embracing universalism. Some hop and others believe that African ancestors will be saved through prayers during the Eucharist.

For example, Edward Fashole-Luke believes that "Ancestor veneration should not be abandoned because it is abused. Nor should it be thrown out because the exporters of Christianity said so." He argues that "African Christians are intellectually Christian but emotionally traditional" and so the Christian Church should provide a substitute for the African traditional relationship with the dead. Fashole-Luke believes that the living may fellowship with their dead ancestors during the Eucharist. It is a "necessary Christian duty in Africa" to pray for the dead, "that God may grant them rest, refreshment, or a joyful resurrection and merciful judgement" (see Glasswell 1974:210-219).This communion with the dead is not limited to believers, according to Fashle-Luke.. During this Communion of Saints was limited to baptized believers. He replied, "We cannot know the extent of God's grace... We may believe that all African ancestors are part of the Body of Christ."

However, our examination of Scripture reveals that we cannot embrace a communion with the dead if we want to be faithful to Scriptures. One can quote church fathers and cite church tradition, but no one can point to any clear teaching in Scripture. When our loved ones pass away into eternity they have been removed from any communication with the living. Christian faith rests in God our Saviour. Our emotions are transformed through the word of God as we grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ. The biblical substitute for the cult of the dead is a warm embrace of Jesus Christ through faith and a continual growth in grace in our knowledge of his Word.

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PORTUGUESE PRESENCE AND ENDEAVOURS IN EAST AFRICA, 1498-1698

Watson A. O. Omulokoli

Part I

Part I of this article provides background information on the explorations and entrance of Christianity in East Africa. Part II and III, which will appear in the next issue of AJET 25.2 2006, focus on political occupation and presence and Christian attempts and efforts in the same period of time (1498-1698). The purpose of the whole article is to supply to the readership scarce information on an area which, although important, is obscure in the minds of many.

I. Background Explorations and Entrance, 1415 – 1498.

Introduction

For a long time, Europe had had contact and trade with the Far East. When European access to the East seemed to be blocked by the domination of the passageways by Middle East Muslim powers, it was necessary to find alternate routes to the cherished East. The ascendancy of these Muslim forces made it risky and expensive to continue using the established trade routes. This was especially true after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. In many ways, this event proved catastrophic to European economic and religious connections with the East. It was with this in view, that Western European nations increased their efforts in the search of "a free way to the East behind the backs of the Muslims."[1]

Prof. Watson A. Omulokoli is the former Chaplain and Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies in Kenyatta University, Kenya. He earned his BTH in Biblical Studies and BA in Theology from Warner Pacific College in Portland, Oregon; his MA in Church History from Wheaton Graduate School in Wheaton, Illinois, and his PhD in Church History from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

Somehow, just at the time when trade and trade routes through one direction were closing, openings began appearing in a different direction. It has been observed that in the midst of these changing fortunes, world-trade was to flow mainly through the Atlantic and that, "the nations which border in the Atlantic were to acquire almost a monopoly of human wealth, and of political control of the sources from which that wealth is drawn."[2] One of the distinctive contributing factors in this new shift turned out to be the improvement in sea travel and communication which resulted from "the evolution in ship-building and seamanship, which took on new dimensions in the fifteenth century and advanced with even-quickening pace through the sixteenth." [3]

The Leading Personality

When efforts of exploration aimed at finding a new sea route to India and the East were embarked upon in earnest, the leading figure in this exercise was
Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal (1394-1460). Prince Henry was born in 1394, and very early in life, he demonstrated interest in affairs outside his European domain. In 1415, he fought in North Africa and helped the Portuguese to defeat the Moors and to capture Ceuta from them. This was a landmark in that this was the first territory that the Portuguese acquired in Africa. About three years after the capture of Ceuta, Prince Henry moved to and settled at Sagres, a promontory "in the extreme south-west of Portugal overlooking the Atlantic"[4]. For the next forty years, Henry lived here and, together with the nearby Lagos as his post, this was the base from which he planned his strategies and assisted in the execution of the resultant voyages of exploration.[5]

When Prince Henry was in north Africa, he learnt a lot about the regions to the south. Of particular interest to him were the prospects of having access to the gold, which these areas were reputed for. The only way of making direct contact with these areas would come if he could "outflank the Muslim lands of Africa" through the envisaged voyages of exploration.[6] In addition to the mercantile motive mentioned above, there were complementary reasons which inspired Prince Henry in the

enterprise of exploration.   A faithful contemporary chronicler named Azurara specifies five reasons why this exercise was undertaken.[7]

1. The first was the scientific reason of finding out the *geographical* knowledge of areas beyond the Canary Islands and the terminus of that time, Cape Bojador.   This interest went beyond the territory of the coast of West Africa and in fact included finding a sea route to India as a mainstay of the scheme.
2. In the second instance, there was a *commercial* aim, especially if a Christian nation to the south could be located to become an ally in trade partnerships.
3. The third reason was *political* in that an opportunity was sought for finding the real strength of the Muslim Moors with a view to preparing to combat them effectively as antagonists.
4. The fourth reason had another *political* dimension in which there was longing to find a Christian ruler with whom Portugal could identify since so far, the search for a friendly sovereign in those areas had produced negative results.
5. In the fifth place, there was a clearly *missionary* reason in which Prince Henry was looking for avenues of spreading the Christian faith to areas and people that had hitherto not been reached.[8]

Since the early part of the 15th century, Prince Henry had distinguished himself as "the spirit and architect of Portugal's seaborne expansion".[9]   As he directed and guided the attendant expeditions, he was accorded greater recognition for his efforts.   In 1455, a part from being praised and recognized through a Papal Bull for helping in promoting the Christian cause, he was given authority by the same Bull to conquer and possess the territories which came under his exploration.[10]   Dealing with the activities which Prince Henry's efforts were connected with and inspired on the western coast of Africa, Neill writes,

> Prince Henry never left his own country and never went himself on any voyage of discovery.   He was the guide and director, and the inspirer of the explorers.   In 1434 Cape Bojador was turned.   In 1444 the first contacts were made

with the [Black] races of tropical Africa. In 1482 the mouth of the Congo was reached. In 1487 Bartholomew Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope.[11]

Brief Outline of Geographical Advance

Following the capture of Ceuta in 1415, Prince Henry had moved to and set his headquarters at Sagres about three years later. As his captains probed ahead, they came across Madeira and "sailed down the African coast to Cape Bojador" within a year or two from the time that he moved to Sagres. This would suggest that by about 1420, Cape Bojador had become the terminus of these expeditions. It has been pointed out that because of fear of the unknown, no one dared proceed beyond this point for the next twelve years or so.[12] When this barrier was broken at last, steady progress was made over the years.

The actual turning point came in 1434 when Gil Eannes, one of Henry's captains, dared to move into the feared territory. As he sailed on and on, he found the coastlands to be more hospitable and inhabited than had been believed. Through this new forward momentum the River Senegal was passed in 1445 as Cape Verde became the most westerly point of Africa reached then. In quick succession, the next expedition went as far as the River Gambia.[13] This was the state of affairs when Prince Henry died in 1460.

Even after his death, the machinery which he had set in motion, coupled with the impetus which he had given the enterprise when he was still alive, helped propel explorations farther. In the next two years following his death, about 600 more miles were explored with the result that the mountainous area of Sierra Leone was reached in 1462. This included journeying as far as Cape Mesurado, the location of the later Monrovia in Liberia.[14] Through an exclusive trade contract which was awarded Fernando Gomez, expeditions continued from 1469 on a new level of enthusiasm. In this manner, the coast of Ghana was reached in 1470, and the following year, 1471, the first crossing of the equator in west Africa was recorded. Over ten years later, in 1482, Diego Cam reached the mouth of the River Congo.[15] Farther along the onward push,

Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1487, thus signalling in a sense that a breakthrough in the search of a sea route to India was imminent. The process was completed when, after going beyond the Cape in 1497, Vasco da Gama made history when he anchored in Calcutta, India, on 20th May, 1498.[16] On the way there, he sailed along the eastern coast of Africa, stopping at Mozambique, Mombasa and Malindi, in the process.[17]

END NOTES

[1] Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*. (London. McGraw Hill, 1966), 35.

[2] Neill, 36

[3] Ibid.

[4] C.P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Volume I to 1840.* 4 Vols. (London. Lutterworth Press, 1964 Reprint.) [1948], 118

[5] Groves I, 118

[6] Groves I, 119

[7] Ibid.

[8] Groves I, 119. [Also see, Clarke, Peter B. *West Africa and Christianity*. (London. Edward Arnold, 1986), 7, for geographical, political, economic and religious objectives].

[9] Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. (London. C. Hurst & Co., 1983), 21.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*. (Middlesex, England. Penguin Books, 1964). [In the case of the mouth of the Congo, opinion varies as to whether it was reached in 1482 or 1484].

[12] Groves I, 119.

[13] Groves I. 123. [Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 37, mentions 1430 as the year when the voyages of discovery were launched and when the Azores were reached. He, however, concurs that progress beyond Bojador was made in 1434].

[14] Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 138. [Groves I, 123-124, points out that opinion is divided on whether the Congo was reached in 1482 or in 1484].

[15] Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions*, 38. [Groves I, 125, puts the sighting of the shores of India on 17th May].

[16] Groves I, 125.

Fighting Corruption in the Human Heart
(Proverbs 4.23-27)

Kenneth L. Hall

I. Introduction

The Bible says that the human heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17.9).[1] This is a bold statement. When we look at the human condition in the early 21st Century, it is not difficult to be persuaded that God's evaluation of mankind's inner spirit is correct. Something is desperately wrong with mankind;[2] we hardly have to turn our eyes or ears to notice the effects of mankind's fallen condition. Terrorism, prostitution, murder, theft, fraud, political corruption, well-thought out deceptive enterprises, and other crimes are in the news and in our back yards almost daily. Not only do we observe such outward and obvious acts of wickedness, but we also know all too well the inner, subtle perversions of the human heart: jealousy, greed, gluttony, lust, and pride, to name a few. Corruption in the heart of man has been around since the day Adam and Eve sinned, and as we admit at all the outward evils and inner evil thoughts that there are in the world today, it doesn't seem that there has been any noticeable improvement in man's basic inner condition over the centuries. We need to face the fact that sin is a worldwide problem affecting every culture, every nation, and every human that has ever been born, and the problem isn't going away.

Meanwhile, God commands Christians to be holy, because he is holy (Lev. 11.44; 1 Pet. 1.15). The Lord expects his people to live godly lives (Tit. 2.12) and to stop sinning. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, "Go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8.11). In fact, 1 John 3.9 says, "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God." In other words, for those who have been born again, they are supposed to gain victory over sin.

On the one hand, the word of God tells us that our heart is sinful, and the

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Ken Hall holds an MA in Old Testament from Columbia International University of South Carolina. He currently teaches Bible and biblical languages at Scott Theological College in Kenya.

[1] All Bible quotes are English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

[2] In this article, terms referring to the human race (man, mankind, humankind) are used generically to include both genders – male and female.

facts of history confirm that indeed we humans are inherently sinful. You don't have to teach a four-year old child how to be bad; he has discovered it already! But parents do have to teach their children to do right. Even a tiny baby, screaming because he is hungry, looks like he could kill for food. Thus we have evidence of an inherent disposition in the human heart that wants to live contrary to God's expectations. Yet on the other hand, Christians are expected not to sin; we are told to obey God, to live righteously, to return good for evil, and to love our enemies. Do Christians sin? Once a person believes in Jesus Christ, is all desire to do bad suddenly gone, so that Christians are instantly immune from this corrupt nature?

No, it will not suffice to say that Christians are a special group of people who don't sin; we know they do. We hear of corruption in the church, pastors using their position of power to get what they want, and Christians getting divorced. Students in Bible schools have been caught stealing from the supermarket; Christians have lied in order to protect themselves. The Crusades, a series of seven major military campaigns and numerous minor ones between 1095 and 1291, were an attempt in the name of religion by Western Europeans to deliver Asia Minor and the Holy Land from Muslim control. In the first crusade, "Antioch and Jerusalem were among the places that fell to the Crusaders; victory in the Holy City was followed by frightful slaughter of their enemies."[3] In the third crusade, Constantinople was conquered and sacked by the West.[4] Thus in the Crusades we have an example of mass slaughter and destruction done in the name of Christian religion. In the modern scene, how many Christian televangelists and pastors have been publicly exposed for falling into sexual immorality? How many church splits have occurred in presumably strong, sound Christian churches over issues that could be worked through if individuals on both sides were patient and loving? How many times have individual Christians reasoned, "God wants me to do this" even though God himself has given clear commands to the contrary in his word? No, Christians are not a group exempt from the corruption of the human heart; they are guilty of sin, just as non-Christians are.

Thus we have a paradox for the Christian. We are told not to sin, yet we sin. In this article I will explore the challenge for the Christian of living a pure and holy life in spite of the presence of the sinful nature. Is there any hope for the Christian of overcoming the sinful nature? We are called to be holy, yet we

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[3] Robert G. Clouse, "Crusades, The," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Revised Edition (J. D. Douglas, general editor; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 274.

[4] ibid.

struggle to live pure lives. Can we really gain victory over sin? Can we succeed in our hope and desire to be like Jesus? What is the answer to this dilemma? How can God expect us to be truly holy if we still have this sinful nature? Do we have to struggle with this problem until we die? Are we hopeless and helpless to improve our lot?

II. Corruption in the human heart

As noted earlier, Jeremiah 17.9 informs us that the heart is corrupted and deceitful. Corruption in the human heart began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve willfully disobeyed God (Gen. 3.1-6). It quickly became apparent that the human race was drastically affected by that initial sin. Adam and Eve, no longer innocent, immediately felt shame over their nakedness (Gen. 3.7), and they were both quick to shift the blame when challenged about their disobedience (Gen. 3.11-13). God had told Adam and Eve that the consequences of their action would include death (Gen. 2.17) and indeed, everyone since then is born to die. Soon came suffering and pain, and neither has not stopped since. A person earns a living only at the price of sweat and tears; a woman gives birth to a child only in great pain; there are relational tensions in the family – all of this just as God said would happen (Gen. 3.16-19).

We see from Gen. 3 that sin is essentially disobedience – when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin and death entered the world. To hide their embarrassment, God needed to make skins to cover them. The skins came from animals that had to be slaughtered, thus death entered the world. When Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4), hatred had clearly entered the world, as the New Testament observes (1 John 3.11-12).

Sin is not merely a 'mistake' or 'criminal offense,' or even just a 'horrible deed.' It is an inner disposition to resist and defy God. "Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."[5] Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3.4), that is, not abiding by God's law. Thus when God says "do not steal," but we steal, we are sinning; or if God commands us to show kindness to the poor (e.g., Deut. 15.7-8; Matt. 19.21) and we don't, we are sinning. Thus sin can be either sin of commission or omission. In other words, if we do something that God says *not to do* (such as stealing), we are guilty of a sin of commission. On the other hand, if we fail to do something that God commands us *to do* (like loving our neighbor), it is a sin of omission.

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[5] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 490.

We have a sinful nature because of Adam's sin – an "inherited corruption."[6] Grudem clarifies this corruption as both a total lack of any spiritual good before God and a total inability to do spiritual good before God.[7] In biblical terms this corruption is described as being dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2.1-2) or being a slave to sin. If we sin, we are a slave to sin (John 8.34). From "a human standpoint people might be able to do much good"[8] but from the biblical perspective all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags (Is. 64.6; cf. Rom. 3.9-20). Thus we cannot become a Christian by our own effort. The Holy Spirit has to convict our hearts (John 16.8), and we have to come to God by faith, believing that what he says is true. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2.8-9). As an old saying goes, "Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to thy cross I cling."[9]

Once we become Christians, we do not automatically stop sinning, as we have already seen. We do not lose the inner disposition to sin; it is still there. However, becoming a Christian involves a new birth, which includes a new power – the power NOT to sin. We are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5.17); we have God's seed in us (1 John 3.9); and the love of God is poured into our hearts (Rom. 5.5). The apostle John loves to describe the Christian as one who is born of God (1 John 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18). This new birth is through the Holy Spirit (John 3.5-8; Gal. 4.29), and it is essentially the Holy Spirit who is the author of our new life in Christ.[10]

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. We will deal with overcoming sin, but the fact is, Christians struggle with sin. Old Testament believers had the

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[6] Grudem, 496.

[7] Grudem, 497.

[8] Grudem, 497-498.

[9] This saying is a paraphrase from a verse of the hymn, "Rock of Ages." The line in the hymn says, "In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling." See *Praises to the Most High: A Selection of Christian Hymns, Gospel Choruses, and Swahili Choruses for East Africa* (Nairobi: AGLC, 1986), # 26.

[10] He gives us understanding of spiritual things, 1 Cor. 2.12; he pours God's love into us, Rom. 5.5; he gives us life, John 6.63; he frees us from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8.2; it is the Spirit who makes us aware of our relationship with the father, Gal. 4.6; Rom. 8.15. We receive the promised Spirit through faith, Gal. 3.14, and once we are born into this new relationship with God, it is expected that we will grow spiritually to maturity (cf. 1 Pet. 2.2; Heb. 6.1-3) and live godly, holy lives, worthy of our calling (cf. Eph. 4.1).

same struggle. King David, the man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13.14; Acts 13.22; cf. Psalm 89.20), sinned grievously on two major occasions. First, he committed adultery with Bathsheba (1 Sam. 11), and then later he took a census of Israel without God's approval (1 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21). David confessed his sin with Bathsheba and acknowledged his own human tendency to sin in Psalm 51. Seeing the corruption in his heart, he said,

> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight... Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me... Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me... Restore to me the joy of Your salvation (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12).

Believers in the New Testament had the same struggle. Peter, the disciple so eager to serve God no matter what the cost, thought he possessed the courage to lay down his life for his Lord (John 13.37), but in the very next verse Jesus said that he would deny him three times that very night – and that's exactly what Peter did. Only years later after much training in the school of discipleship did Peter willingly lay down his life for Jesus (by being crucified upside down, according to tradition). The apostle Paul struggled greatly with sin; let's observe him wrestling in his bondage to sin as he describes it in Romans 7:

> [14] For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.
> [15] I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.
> [16] Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.
> [17] So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.
> [18] For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.
> [19] For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.
> [20] Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.
> [21] So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.
> [22] For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,
> [23] but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

[24] Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

I acknowledge that in Romans 7 it is disputed whether Paul's struggle was before he became a believer or afterward. Let us observe the overall logical progression in Romans from condemnation (1.18-3.20) to justification (3.21-5.21) to sanctification (6-8). In Romans 6-8, Paul discusses our sanctification – our growth toward Christian maturity, becoming more like Christ. He makes three major points: don't sin (ch. 6); we can't stop sinning on our own effort (ch. 7); we can overcome sin through the Holy Spirit (ch. 8). In this context, I understand Romans 7 to refer to the common Christian problem of living by the power of the flesh – attempting to live the Christian life through our own effort (which is an impossibility). I also believe Romans 7 has a wider application to any person, even an unbeliever, trying to please God through his own efforts (also an impossibility). Paul and any Christian, for that matter, will fail to please God if he doesn't live the Christian life by faith. I believe that one reason for so many problems in the church and in individual Christians' lives is that they do not consistently live by the power God gave them. We take matters into our own hands rather than availing ourselves of the Holy Spirit. Although he is the very one who empowers us to gain victory over sin, we fail to tap him as our power source. We fall into the same cycle of bondage to sin that we found ourselves in before we believed.

Galatians 5.17 says there is an inner struggle in the believer's heart between good and evil – between the (Holy) Spirit and the flesh: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do." Every believer struggles to let the Spirit gain victory over the flesh. The tendency to sin is still there in the believer, and it doesn't go away. We become like the Galatians, having begun by the Spirit, but trying to become mature by the flesh, by our own natural, human effort, rather than by faith (cf. Gal. 3.1-7). Sin is "a power that seeks to destroy,"[11] and instead of us ruling over sin, it rules over us. We have not adequately come to grips with the fact that we as Christians can accomplish no spiritual good by any effort of our own.

III. God's standard and expectation of pure living for Christians

As Christians we instinctively know we are not supposed to sin. Our conscience tells us not to commit evil in thought, word, or deed. We know we should be

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[11] Edward Pollasch, "The Problem of Sin," unpublished article, obtained from the author October 2005.

upright and moral in a decadent society. Eunice Kamaara observed the declining social state of Africa: "In Kenya, for instance, social evils such as rape, robbery, sexual promiscuity, and murder are common features of social life... . We are living in a world whose moral fibres have decayed to an extent that it is threatened with collapse."[12] Kamaraa rightly gives a call to be salt and light even though it is difficult to apply the Bible's summary teaching to love your neighbor as you love yourself. In suggesting how to live morally, she advises us first of all not to join the world's bandwagon, but rather to speak out against and correct moral evils. Secondly, she adds, we should love our neighbour.[13] This is hard to do! Yet the whole Old Testament Law, given by God in order to lay out his standard of righteousness for his people, is summarized by the statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19.18). The same standard carries on into the New Testament: Jesus tells us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as our self (Matt. 22.39-40). Not only that; Jesus' standard of righteousness is even higher than the letter of the Old Testament law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus went beyond the actual deeds of evil that the Old Testament forbade (such as murder and adultery) and got to the root issue of our heart attitudes and desires. If the Old Testament said "you shall not murder," Jesus said, "everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matt. 5.21-22). If the Old Testament said, "you shall not commit adultery," Jesus said, "But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5.27-28). The truth is, God didn't expect his people in the Old Testament merely to keep the letter of the Law; he was after their heart! God was looking for the right heart motives *behind* their keeping of his commandments. Not only did Jesus explain this in Matthew 5; in numerous places in the Old Testament, God says so himself. Doesn't Micah 6.8 say, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Doesn't Psalm 24.3-4 ask rhetorically who may stand in God's holy place, and answer with "He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully"? God's standard of righteousness includes not merely our outward acts, but our inner thoughts – our heart. He wants clean hearts, the fruit of which will be proper outward morality. So it is not as though God was merely a God of law in the Old Testament and a God of love or grace in the New; his standard of righteousness covers both our outward actions as well as our inner motivations, both in the Old Testament and the New. God hasn't changed. His commands to love one another, to deal justly in our

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[12] Eunice Kamaara, "Being a Christian in an Immoral Society," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 14 (1) 1995, 25, 29.
[13] Kamaara, 29.

relationships, to do good, to help the poor, to love our enemy, and all other commands are all derived from the foundational commands to love God and to love our neighbor as our self. This is his standard; this is what he expects from Christians.

IV. Man's inability to fulfill God's standard of righteousness, and God's solution

Did God give the Law through Moses expecting that man would be able to obey all the Laws and thus deserve to be counted righteous in God's sight? It is sometimes thought so, however, that is not what the Bible teaches. God never expected the Law to be a means of righteousness. Three key verses in the New Testament state the purpose of the OT Law. "The law was added so that the trespass might increase" (Rom. 5.20, NIV); "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary" (Gal. 3.19, ESV); "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3.24, NIV).

First of all, God gave the Law not to suggest that by our efforts in keeping the Law we could be considered worthy of getting to heaven when we die. Rather, God wanted us to see that we *couldn't* keep his perfect standard. The Law came not at the beginning of history, but a long time after creation. From the beginning, the quality of being counted righteous before God came not by keeping the Law, but rather by faith. The father of the faith, Abraham, "believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15.6). Paul expounds on this point in Romans 4 and Galatians 3. If God had meant for mankind to earn righteousness by keeping his standards, he might have given the Law in Genesis 2 rather than Exodus 20. "[T]he Law is unable to deal with the sinful inclinations which have been ours since our first parents sinned."[14] It is very interesting to consider that in the Old Testament, only the priests and the Levites were allowed to enter the temple. Why was this? "Let no one enter the house of the LORD except the priests and ministering Levites. They may enter, for they are holy, but all the people shall keep the charge of the LORD" (2 Chr. 23.6). The implication is that anyone who wasn't a priest wasn't holy. If this was literally true, then all those who weren't Levites could never meet up to

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[14] John N. Oswalt, *Called to Be Holy: A Biblical Perspective* (Nappannee, Indiana: Francis Asbury Press, 1999), 106.

God's standard of holiness, because they weren't descendants of Aaron, from whom the Levites came. In actuality, the laws relating to the temple (such as the restrictions on entering the temple) were really a shadow of the reality of Christ; they portrayed in symbolic form our relationship to God through Christ. In the OT anyone could indeed be counted righteous by faith, as Hab. 2.4 states ("but the righteous shall live by his faith"). That verse is quoted and expanded on in three New Testament books – Romans (1.17), Galatians (3.11), and Hebrews (11.38). So the Law was given so that people could realize God's standard was too hard for them to keep, and that they needed help. According to Rom. 5.20, our trespass increases – we realize that our sin is worse than we thought. The law arouses sin. For example. if God says. "don't covet," we automatically start thinking about coveting. To use an absurd illustration, if I say, "Don't think about pink elephants for the next five minutes," what are you going to be doing for the next five minutes? The Law showed us what we should and shouldn't do, and God was hoping that people would realize, "I can't keep God's law, and nobody else can either – I need help! God, only you can help me! I need you!"

The thrust of Romans 7-8 and Galatians 3-4 is that we are unable to fulfill the requirements of the Law: this is a truth of life for the Christian and non-Christian alike. The problem comes when *we* think *we* can do something toward living the Christian life – we sort of `help God.` But the whole point of the gospel is that we can't help God with anything, ever. The OT Law tried to tell Israel that. Anything we ever accomplish is by grace, start to finish. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for *apart from Me you can do nothing*" (John 15.4-5, italics mine). We can do no spiritual good; we can accomplish nothing toward providing our own righteousness, ever. It is by grace through faith from beginning to end, "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5.7).

So this leads us to the second major purpose of the Law – the Law didn't merely point out our problem; it promised a solution through the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. The whole point of the Law, after showing us that we could not keep the Law, was point us to the divine intervention that would one day come. The only way we could keep the Law is if God did it for us. So, in the Old Testament scheme, Israel needed to realize that they needed a Messiah, a Savior, to redeem them from their bondage to sin. It is worth noting that Israel's deliverance from literal bondage in Egypt prefigured the redemption from our greatest bondage, bondage to sin available through Christ:

In the New Testament reflections on and developments of the Old Testament concept of redemption, the bondage in view is always and everywhere the demonic power known as sin. Whereas iniquity lies dimly in the background of every ancient form of slavery, Christ and his disciples made it explicitly clear that sin is our real enemy.[15]

So by our own human, natural efforts. we cannot keep God's law. But what we cannot do, God did by sending his son and giving us his Spirit so that we will live by the Spirit, not by 'the flesh' (Rom. 8.1-11). It is important to look at this key New Testament term, 'the flesh,' for this term is used to identify this natural human effort that fights against God's way of living the Christian life. The word 'flesh' (Gk. *sarx*) has four uses in the NT:[16]

(1) 'Flesh' can be used in an entirely physical sense – this has a good connotation. For example. in Col. 1.21-22, Paul explains that Christ had reconciled the readers to God from a state of alienation and hostility of mind "in his body of flesh by his death." Here the reference is to Christ in his human body, and 'flesh' has no negative connotation.

(2) 'Flesh' can refer to desires related to bodily needs such as sleep, food, water, sex, etc. The connotation can be good or bad depending on whether these desires are under control. For example, in Eph. 2.3, Paul states that "we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." In this case, the term refers to bodily desires that characterize a person before he becomes a Christian, and which can get out of control. Before a person believes in Christ, he has no supernatural help available to deliver him from such passions. This is not to say that unbelievers never have self-control, only that they do not have the Holy Spirit's presence to guide and deliver them. Hence, it is possible for some non-Christians to appear more 'righteous' than some Christians – a fact well observed by non-Christians!

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[15] Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the Old Testament*: A Survey of Key Theological Themes, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 109.

[16] Oswalt, 114-116. I am indebted to John Oswalt's book for the following explanation of 'the flesh' and for his in-depth discussion of the Christian calling to a holy life.

(3) 'Flesh' can also mean "that attitude which says that all there is to life is the satisfaction of bodily desire, and the acquisition of physical possessions." This is "the attitude that dominates much of the modern media culture." This use of 'flesh' is what 1 John 2.16 refers to as the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It has a bad meaning.[17]

(4) 'Flesh' can also refer "to human pride and self-will." This is a bad meaning,[18] and this is the sense that is meant in passages dealing with the sinful nature such as Rom. 7.14-23; 8.4-8; 1 Cor. 14.26; Gal. 5.16-17.

Oswalt's explanation of 'the flesh' is telling:

> This New Testament concept of 'the flesh' is similar to the Old Testament ideas of the 'spirit of prostitution' or the 'evil imagination.' It is that in us which predisposes us to want our way instead of God's way. It is that which insists upon determining all matters of right and wrong for itself, and since it is in rebellion against God, it inevitably calls evil, good and good, evil."[19]

Our natural tendency is to live by our own effort. We are self-driven. Yet once we believe in Christ, we have a new birth (John 3.3) into God's family: we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5.17). In other words, we have been transformed out of Satan's kingdom of darkness into God's kingdom of God's son (Col. 1.13). We have a new power to overcome the self-drivenness. We are God's adopted children and have the rights as his children (John 1.12). This new birth gives us an element of God's divine nature because we have God's seed in us (2 Pet. 1.4; 1 John 3.9). In other words we are enabled to escape the corruption that is in the world and we are able not to practice sin (again, referring to 2 Pet. 1.4 and 1 John 3.9). This is because we have been given the Holy Spirit who enables us to practice righteousness (Rom. 8.1-11). To rephrase it, we can live the 'exchanged life' – "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life 1 now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2.20).

The Lord uses two means to give us the grace to live righteously and not sin: the Spirit of God and the word of God. First, the Spirit gives us life (Rom.

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[17] Oswalt, 115.
[18] ibid.
[19] ibid.

8.11); God saved us "according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the *Holy Spirit*" (Tit. 3.5, italics mine). Second, we have born again of imperishable seed, the *word of God* (1 Pet. 1.23, italics mine), through which we grow in respect to salvation (1 Pet. 2.2). "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The *words* that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6.63, italics mine). Jesus is the living word and as we have fellowship with him by faith, we find the power to live the way God commands us to – even to love others as much as we love our self, which in practice is quite hard to do!

Sincere Christians don't intend to sin; we just find our selves doing it (as Paul in Rom. 7.17-25). It's like a player in a professional soccer game who knows the rules so well but discovers himself being given a flag for going offsides. He didn't intend to do it, but he did it. Christians just discover themselves sinning. But there is a solution to the problem of sin; the solution is *surrender*. We need to give up trying on our own effort and let God work through us by his divine power. We should stop trying and start trusting.

Paul sums the whole Christian life well with his call to self-sacrifice in Rom. 12.1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." We need to be a living sacrifice and thus consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Christ (Rom. 6.11).

But there is one problem with a living sacrifice – it wants to crawl off the altar! We don't like to 'let go and let God' – but we have to in order to please God. Without faith it is impossible to please him (Heb. 11.6)! But the whole point is that we won't taste those rivers of living water (John 7.37-39) until we give up our own efforts. That is what Jesus meant when he talked about taking our cross daily and hating our own life. It isn't our life anyway; God gave it to us and he has a right to ask for it back. God wants a personal relationship with us through Jesus Christ, and it's available for the asking – but at a cost. No other religion offers the power to live rightly, and no other religion has a living Savior like we do. Yes, the gospel tells us we're sinners and need forgiveness, but yes, the gospel brings a full, abundant life through Christ.

> *To walk and run the law commands,*
> *But gives us neither feet nor hands.*
> *Yet better news the gospel brings;*

It bids us fly – and gives us wings.

We have a higher calling than the world offers. Our God has transferred us into his spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that will one day become an earthly kingdom when Christ returns. And not only can we can have 'pie in the sky when we die'; we can begin slicing in this life! Jesus came that we "may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10.10). The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3.6). The Law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1.17). In spite of our natural inability to fulfill God's standards, we are nonetheless able to fulfill his demands perfectly, since he has given us all the grace and resources we need. All we have to do is cease striving in our own effort and lay hold of the divine power already there and waiting to be tapped.

> How do you account for the seeming weakness within the church and in many individual believers? Is God selective in granting his power for righteous living; is the Spirit impotent to perform his ministry; or are believers negligent in appropriating the power made available to each of us? Read the opening chapters of Acts to see how the Spirit was unleashed upon the church with power."[20]

V. An apparent contradiction?

All of this raises a concern. If God has indeed enabled his people to live righteously by giving the Spirit, his word, his Son, and his grace, then *why don't Christians live consistent lives? Why do we still struggle with sin?* I believe it is because our redemption is not complete in this life. Though everything we have said so far is true, and we do have full capability not to sin, there is another side to the coin. Yes, we have been given the new nature; yes, we are a new creation is Christ; but we still have the sinful nature. It was not taken away when we believed in Christ. There is still a flaw in the human spirit (the flesh) that makes us prefer the impure to the pure.[21] We have the principle of sin within us; nothing good dwells in our flesh (Rom. 7.14-18). If we probe into our heart we find we not only have the Spirit, but we also still have the flesh, and the Spirit and the flesh fight against each other to gain control over us (Gal. 5.16-17).

We are only partly redeemed in this life. There are three stages of redemption: At the moment of salvation we were redeemed from the penalty of sin (Rom.

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[20] R. C. Sproul, *Before the Face of God, Book 1: A Daily Guide for Living From the Book of Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 189.

[21] Oswalt, p. 121.

6.23); during this life we are daily redeemed from the power of sin as we walk by faith (2 Cor. 5.7; Gal. 2.20-3.11); and when we see Christ we will be redeemed from the very presence of sin (cf. 1 Thess. 5.23). In this life we still struggle to live purely, yet at times we fail. This does not give us any excuse to sin, however! We must constantly purify ourselves, fixing our hope on Christ's return (1 Pet. 1.13), confess our sin when it becomes known 1 John 2.1-2, and stand firm in the grace that gives us victory in this life (1 Pet. 5.10; cf. Heb. 4.16). To the degree that we set our mind on things above – on Christ and on the Spirit, we will avoid sinning, and will have life and peace (Col. 3.1-4; Rom. 8.4, 6). But to the extent that we divert our minds to the vain pleasures of this world, we will live according to the flesh, which is death (Rom. 8.6). We have the capacity not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5.18; Rom. 8.6, 13), and yet we find ourselves occasionally sinning. Yet we should always strive to grow in grace. This does not mean more human effort to live right, however! That is the very danger we have to overcome! Remember the Galatians? "[T]he Christian life is never one in which our own human effort secures the relationship.... No, the Christian life is one of grace through faith operating from end to end."[22]

This is "the crisis of the deeper life," to quote the title of a book on this very issue.[23] In essence, we need to continue living by faith rather than by sight, rather than our own human effort – and as is evident from the condition of the church and our own Christian experience, it is not easy! Christians are capable of every sin that non-Christians are capable of. But lest we despair and think that there is no hope and that the sinful nature will defeat us, let us remember two facts. First, God is at work in us to will and to work for his good pleasure (Phil. 2.13). He has begun a good work in us and will keep changing us and making us grow into Christ-likeness (Phil. 1.6). Second, Jesus Christ will build his church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Matt. 16.18). The whole idea of becoming a Christian and being part of the body of Christ was God's idea, not ours. He started the church, he saved us, and it is his power that will keep us going and deliver us safely into his kingdom (cf. 2 Tim. 4.8).

Yet we have a part to play. We are not robots; we *do* have a free will. We have to choose daily and hourly and moment-by-moment to follow him. It is because God is at work in us that we need to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12-13). God works with us in a cooperative way. Victory over sin is by God's power and doing, yet in God's sovereignty he has chosen to use our free will. "Whatever experiences with God we may have had,

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[22] Oswalt, p. 113.
[23] George P. Pardington, *The Crisis of the Deeper Life* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1991).

he never removes our capacity for free will, and unless we continue to cooperate with the Spirit who is filling us, there is always the possibility of regression."[24] It is we who live the Christian life, but he lives it through us (Gal. 2.20) – this is a paradox that is hard for our finite minds to grasp. Our problem is not really a *contradiction* as it is a *mixture* of the two natures – the presence of two opposing natures – in our inner being. This presence of the sinful nature means we cannot reach sinless perfection in this life – a fact that God knows and accepts (cf. 1 John 1.8), and a fact that we should live with, too. But this is no excuse to be complacent about sin! We cannot say, as some did, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6.1) Of course not! God expects us to settle for nothing less than holiness. And it is not so much that we *must* obey God; it is more that we *may* obey him.[25]

VI. Practical considerations in living the exchanged life

Both Scripture and the realities of life teach us that there is an ideal standard of sinlessness that we won't actually reach in this life. God doesn't condemn us for being imperfect; he God knows and understands, and he cares for us (Ps. 55.22; 1 Pet. 5.7). He knows we are but dust (Ps. 103.14). He loves us just the way we are – but too much to let us stay that way. He works with us where we are, not where we should be, yet he steers us on toward the goal of Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8.28-30), always wanting and expecting us to gain victory over sin in new areas of life. A significant reality of the Christian life is that once we gain victory in one area. God will conveniently reveal a new area of weakness for us to work on!

Christian hymns are full of the reality of needing to walk by faith and yielding ourselves to him, accepting his good and acceptable and perfect will for our lives. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."[26] Another songwriter expresses his sacrificial commitment of himself to God in the hymn, "Take My Life and Let It Be." The last stanza says, "Take my will and make it Thine – it shall be no longer mine; Take my heart – it is Thine own, It shall be Thy royal throne"[27]

Practically speaking, how can we truly be fully consecrated to God so that we can live exemplary lives, choosing consistently to obey God and to love our

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[24] Oswalt, 74.

[25] Oswalt, 121.

[26] The chorus of "Trust and Obey" (*Praises to the Most High*, # 68).

[27] *The Celebration Hymnal: Songs and Hymns for Worship* (USA: Word / Integrity, 1997), # 597.

neighbor? I don't believe there is any magical formula or guarantee that will ensure us success; it seems to depend on a daily humbling of oneself before God. If there were a guaranteed formula for spiritual success, surely some early Christians would have found it. After all, we are what we are by the grace of God, and ultimately if it weren't for God's grace you and I might be out there as violent criminals.

Having said that, some scattered suggestions may help us when we struggle with sin:

- Accept the fact the God will never love you more than he does right now. Our holiness doesn't "cause his love and acceptance; it is the glad response to that love"[28]
- We should cleanse ourselves very frequently from impurity, so that we may be "a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work" (2 Tim. 2.21). We have the hope of heaven, so we should purify ourselves as we prepare to spend eternity with Christ (1 John 2.28-3.2).
- Distinguish between *sin* and *temptation to sin*. It is not a sin to be tempted, but what you do with the temptation? Do you linger on it or do you renounce it?
- Sources of temptation include not only our sin nature but also the world and the devil. This topic would take another article to develop, but suffice it to say here that the evil one tries to capitalize on our weaknesses in order to destroy us. 1 Peter 5.8 says, "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour". Satan does tempt us, but if we yield to his temptations, we cannot shift the blame to him as Eve tried to do in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3.13). We cannot blame the devil when we sin. James 1.14 puts it this way: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."
- Realize that sanctification is a process as well as an event. We *grow* in Christlikeness. Growth takes time, so we shouldn't expect perfection instantly. Holiness is a result of both crisis and process.
- Let me say immediately, however, that God is in the business of changing us, and gives victory over sin, so we must never underestimate God's power to do a miraculous work in our lives. We can make a clean break with sinful habits by his power. It is not merely

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[28] Oswalt, 195. This thought, as well as some others listed in this section, are adapted from Oswalt's last chapter, "Walking in Holiness."

psychological help or slow progress that brings change. We can suddenly and drastically be different from what we used to be. In my estimation, a failure in the church is that we do not realize this very fact. We often set our sights too low on what to expect of Christian growth. We sometimes tend tolerate and excuse sin, not believing in God's power to alter us radically.

- Cry out to God for mercy and beseech him to change you.
- Realize that God's ways are not our ways. Greatness in God's kingdom comes through humility (Matt. 18.1): strength comes through weakness (2 Cor. 12.10), and the way to a crown is through a cross. God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom.[29]
- Knowing all that God has done for us, we can treat the old body of sin as dead (Rom. 6.11). We have been baptized into Christ's death (Rom. 6.3); the death he died, he died to sin (6.10), and as he was raised to life, so we partake in his resurrection power (Rom. 6.4; 8.11; Phil. 3.10).
- We must have the Holy Spirit's power in order not to sin. Romans 8 is particularly relevant here. We cannot ultimately assure victory over sin by anything *we* do; we must let God do it through us, as Gal. 2.20 so clearly explains. It is the grace of God, which ultimately God controls, not we our selves.
- Stop trying to live by the law. No amount of ritualistic obedience to laws or following religious expectations will make you more holy. This does not mean, of course, that you shouldn't go to church. However, to say that going to church will make you a Christian is like saying that walking into a car parking spot makes you a car. Holiness is a passion, not a performance.
- Avoid pharisaic dangers such as paying attention to the minutiae of the law while overlooking major concerns like justice, mercy, and love.
- We should take practical precautions by avoiding places and scenarios that we know will encourage us to sin. For example, if you are a former alcoholic and struggle with being tempted when you are around alcoholic beverages, don't loiter around the bar quoting "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"! Instead, flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2.22), which is far wiser. Run from sin, like Joseph did when Potiphar's wife tried to entice him (Gen. 39).

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[29] Cf. the book by that name: Donald Kraybill, *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, 25th Anniversary Edition (Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2003).

- Foster fellowship with God. This comes through solitude and silence, meditation, prayer, and intercession.[30]
- Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life (Prov. 4.23). Ask God to search your heart and expose any sin (Psalm 139.23) – and be willing to accept whatever God reveals. Are you serious about living for God? We can't tap God's power until our wills are broken so that we can accept God's will. "To be broken is the beginning of revival. It is painful, it is humiliating, but it is the only way."[31]
- Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him (Ps. 37.1).

Can a Christian stop sinning? I believe we can. God commands not to be enslaved to sin (Romans 6). Not only that; he has given us the power not to sin: the Holy Spirit, who sets us free from sin (Romans 8). The problem comes when we try in our own effort not to sin (Romans 7). We fail unless we let God live out his life in us through the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of whether we set our minds on the Spirit or on the flesh (Rom. 8.5-6). In spite of the apparent thinking in some quarters that we are in large measure doomed to a life defeated by sin, I believe we can live a life of righteousness as we trust God by faith to manifest his power over sin through us.[32]

God's word says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5.3) A. W. Tozer, in his famous book, *The Pursuit of God*, concisely sums up what it means to have the blessing of the kingdom of heaven in one's life:

> The way to deeper knowledge of God is through the lonely valleys of soul poverty and abnegation of all things. The blessed ones who possess the Kingdom are they who have repudiated every external thing and have rooted from their hearts all sense of possessing. These are the 'poor in spirit.' They have reached an inward state paralleling the outward circumstances of the common beggar in the streets of Jerusalem. That is what the word *poor* as Christ used it actually means. These blessed poor are no longer slaves to the tyranny of things. They have broken the yoke of the oppressor; and this they have done not by fighting by surrendering.

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[30] Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Life Together.* Translated, and with an Introduction by John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1954), 76-89.

[31] Hession, Roy and Revel, The *Calvary Road* (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1990), 21.

[32] Cf. 2 Cor. 5.7; Gal. 2.20.

Though free from all sense of possessing, they yet possess all things. 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[33]

VII.   Significance for the modern African church

Paul Kisau has published an important article, "The Key to the African Heart."[34] He, like many others, discusses the saying that "African Christianity is a mile long and an inch deep," commenting that this common phrase is both a compliment that African Christianity has had enormous growth in the past several decades, and a criticism that "[t]his growth in numbers has however not been accompanied by spiritual depth."[35] He goes on to say, "The depth here refers to the quality of African Christianity. To say that it is an inch deep is to imply that Africans in general have not allowed the gospel to control every part of their life."[36]

The church in Africa will certainly benefit from a full submission to the gospel. Kisau cites two examples of big challenges that faced Africa in the 90's: inadequate discipling and syncretism. "Africans accept the gospel but still cling to African traditional beliefs."[37] *Operation World* agrees: "Thoroughgoing repentance and renunciation of sin and the works of darkness is often lacking and many Christians are not free from the fear of witchcraft and evil spirits."[38]

These same challenges still face the African church a decade later, and the need for repentance and revival is still paramount. Yet the challenges seem to have grown. Now we are faced with alarming inroads of immorality among churchgoers and church leaders in some denominations. There are power struggles, pride of position, pressuring of people for money for building projects, and so forth. We are not serious enough about our faith; we are trying to serve both God and man, and the love of the world is in us (1 John 2.15-17). We are trying to be friends with the world, but that is enmity toward God – spiritual adultery (James 4.4).

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[33] A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, Inc., 1982), 23.

[34] Kisau, Paul. "The Key to the African Heart" (*Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 17 (2) 1998), 85-106.

[35] Kisau, 93.

[36] Kisau, 95.

[37] ibid.

[38] quoted in Kisau, 95.

The Christian life should consist of a love relationship between the believer and God. Yet in African culture there appears to be an element of African traditional religion carrying over into the Christian faith that squelches the inner (and intimate) love relationship we should have with him and that focuses merely on the outward keeping of God's laws. If African traditional religion involves appeasing the spirits in bribe-like manner in the hope of manipulating the spirits to help the worshiper or to do good things for him, perhaps in our Christian worship some similar attitudes carry over. For example, there seems to be a lot of emphasis on keeping Christian rules and attending church merely as a duty, rather than enjoying the blessing of fellowship and worship together with other believers. Do most churchgoers really enjoy their Christian life? In other words, do we as Christians truly sense God's presence in our life, and are we happy as a result? Are we spiritually fed, both through our own personal devotional life and through meaningful worship services? Do we sense the power of the Holy Spirit giving us his grace and guiding us to obey him with pleasure? Or, on the contrary, is our experience more like a grievous task that we almost resent because to be a Christian means just trying (and failing) to follow a burdensome list of rules and regulations? When we realize the extent of God's love for us and all he has done to secure our salvation, it should be easier to respond with love and joy, surrendering our heart and will to his good plan for our lives.

As an expatriate westerner in Kenya, I have heard that "Africans don't change." For example, many still use bows and arrows after thousands of years. Yet in Christ we are changed into a new creation, and God enables us to live new and joyful lives, victorious over the control of sin through the power of Christ. How can we cultivate this joyful, victorious life? Proverbs 4.23-27 gives us a concise and sure three-step guideline. *First*, we must keep our heart vigilantly, for "from it flow the springs of life" (4.23). Our heart is a garden, and we must keep weeding it of sin, just as the farmer diligently weeds his garden in order to keep the fruit growing. We must diligently cultivate righteousness in our heart so that we can grow spiritually and have a fruitful Christian life.[39] *Second*, we must put away crooked speech (4.24). In other words, confessing sin is followed by a life that is pure in speech. When our inner thoughts are made right, so are our words. *Third*, we must pursue a straight path for our feet, turning away from evil (4.25-27). That is, not only are our thoughts and our speech transformed, but also our deeds. When we turn from sin, our whole life is

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[39] Weeding our heart of sin involves humbling ourselves before God, exposing our inner motives to him, and letting him point out sin in our lives so that we can confess it.

affected. [40] The imagery of feet and a path in Proverbs reminds us that the normal Christian experience is a walk – an ongoing lifestyle of pursuing righteousness and walking in newness of life. [41]

VIII. Conclusion

So what is the conclusion to the matter of corruption in the human heart? For the Christian, God's "divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pet. 1.3-4). God has not shortchanged us; he calls us to live righteous, exemplary lives of integrity, and he has given us everything we need to live in keeping with this high and holy calling. When we do stumble and sin, it is because that element of corruption, the sinful nature, has successfully lured us away from faith in Christ. The temptation to sin will always be there (and in full force) even in the godliest of Christians, until the day we meet the Lord. But we have a power in us greater than our sinful nature – we have the power of Christ's resurrection, which comes by the grace of God through the Holy Spirit when we trust him for it. God expects us to fight and win. "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4.4).

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THE FORMATION OF AFRICAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Detlef Kapteina

I. The Historical Setting of African Evangelical Theology

A. AEA General Assembly 1973

The beginnings of African evangelical theology are closely linked with events at the Christian Education Strategy Conference that was held 25-31 January 1973 in Limuru, Kenya, immediately preceding the 2nd General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (now AEA) held at the same venue. It was at this Christian Education Strategy Conference that participants expressed an urgent concern regarding the lack of relevant theological reflection in their churches. They expressed a need for higher academic theological training to equip the church in its struggle with various challenges in Africa.

Instrumental in this call for higher theological expertise was the young Nigerian church leader Byang Kato. Regarding Kato's influence during this conference and the following AEA General Assembly, it is the estimation of the African scholar Tite Tiénou that "the challenge he gave marked a turning point in evangelical theological development in Africa."[1] In his

Dr. Detlef Kapteina is on the teaching staff of a Bible College in Tunduru, Tanzania. Formerly he served in Sierra Leone, lecturing at the Sierra Leone Bible College, and thereafter as a pastor inGermany. His advanced theological studies were done at the University of Gottingen. This essay is based on his doctoral dissertation, completed at the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Heverlee-Leuven, Belgium, and published in 2001, under the title: Das ganze Evangelium dem Afrikaner. Profile Africanischer Evangelikaler Theologie.

[1] Tite Tiénou: "The Theological Task of the Church in Africa: Where are we now and where should we be Going?" *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 6/1 (1987) p. 3.

presentation entitled "Theological Trends in Africa Today," Kato coined the term of "theological anemia" as the major problem of the African church, allowing "syncretism, universalism, and Christo-paganism" to creep into the church. He prophesied for the 1970s that "the spiritual battle for Africa ... will be fought...largely on theological grounds."[2]

The result of Kato's impressive address was that the Christian Education Strategy Conference presented two proposals to the Assembly, to establish not only (a) an AEA Christian Education Commission, but also (b) an AEA Theological Commission. The proposals were unanimously approved. The latter Commission was to take up the functions of the former AEBICAM (Association of Evangelical Bible Institutes and Colleges in Africa and Madagascar), which had been launched at the inaugural session of AEA in 1966, especially as the administrative frame for promoting Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in Africa. The other main thrust of the new Theological Commission was the decision to establish two graduate schools of theology, one for the francophone Africa and the other for the anglophone Africa.[3]

Byang Kato was thus a key figure at this starting point for official theological endeavour and strategy by Africa's evangelicals. He became the AEA General Secretary, the Executive Secretary of the AEA Theological Commission, and he was the main toiler behind preparations for founding the francophone Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST), the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), and the Evangelical Theological Society (ETSA).

But in making this assessment one should not overlook the historical framework of AEA structures, combined with the earlier awareness of Christian Education concerns, which led to the planning of the 1973

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[2] B. Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa.* Achimota, Ghana, 1985; p. 11

[3] For more about other specific assignments for this Commission see in: *Africa Pulse* IV/1 (4/1973) p. 3-4 (e.g. academic evaluation and accreditation, and theological research).

Christian Education Strategy Conference. This conference was to develop adequate programmes for "biblical training of laymen" to help their needs "for deeper teaching of the Scriptures, for understanding and application of their truths" . The conference was to "reflect a shared concern for the propagation of conservative evangelical Christian teaching in Africa."[4]

It is also noteworthy of understanding the opening phase in the formation of evangelical African theology to recognise that the first sprouts grew out of the well-prepared ground of six AEA constitutional purposes relating the task of evangelicals in Africa, to the public manifestation of "belief in the infallibility of the written Word of God" in the second place, and to "alert Christians to ... dangers which would undermine the scriptural foundation of the gospel testimony..." in the fifth place.[5]

The context of such concerns substantiated the spirit out of which the AEA Theological Commission was born and which marked the early stage of African evangelical theology as a theology safeguarding the church against syncretism and universalistic soteriology, "defending the church's doctrinal position",[6] and holding firmly to the Bible as the "basic source of Christian theology".[7]

B. Opposition to "African Theology"
To identify the causes for the rise of evangelical theology in Africa, a second context must be considered: the growing influence of publications from African theologians outside evangelical circles, who from the beginning of the 1960s attempted to develop an indigenous concept of theology. They made considerable effort to rehabilitate African traditional religion (ATR) by proving it to be a religion equal to other recognised

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[4] *Africa Pulse*, Wheaton; Vol III, No.4 (9/1972), p. 3.

[5] *Africa Pulse* (Wheaton) Vol. III, No.4 (9/1972) p. 1-2.

[6] B. Kato: *Biblical Christianity* ... (1985), p. 13.

[7] Ibid., p. 12.

world religions and therefore to be a substantive source for theological reflection in Africa, and they even tried to present ATR as "preparatio evangelica" for the Christian Gospel.[8] John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu were principal pioneers of such a theology, which received since the late 1950s the name of "African Theology".[9] Even though the term had been used that early, Kato and Mbiti both agreed that still during the late 1960s the church in Africa found itself "in the situation of trying to exist without a theology".[10]

This deplorable assessment provoked a man like Idowu, along with others, to search for a strong beginning. The ecumenically-oriented All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) had been formed in 1963 to link mostly main-line churches on the continent, and Idowu appears to have functioned within those circles in a similar way as Kato within AEA, as an initiator of theological endeavour in claiming to help the church do a better job in Africa. Idowu was the promoter and the pre-eminent speaker at the first pan-African Protestant theological conference held in Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1966, which worked under the theme "Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs", and where for the first time at a conference an attempt was made to identify "African Christian Theology". In several historical reviews this conference is considered to be the starting point or 'momentum' towards

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[8] John Mbiti: *Concepts of God in Africa*. N.Y., 1970; p. xiii.

[9] Other important names have to be added here as early African proponents of African Theology, for instance C.G. Baeta, H. Sawyerr, and K.Dickson on the Protestant side, V. Mulago and T.Tshibangu on the Catholic side. We concentrate in this paper on Mbiti and Idowu, because Kato addresses his theological work mainly to these two African theologians.

[10] B. Kato in *Biblical Christianity* (1985) p. 11; regrettably he does not give the source of his quotation of Mbiti. But a similar observation of Mbiti is stated in "Afrikanische Beiträge zur Christologie" in Beyerhaus, P., editor. *Theologische Stimmen aus Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika*. München, 1968; p. 72: "Doch hat die Kirche noch keine wissenschaftliche Theologie, ... und kennt noch keine theologischen Fragen."

that 'African Theology' to which AEA leaders felt a need to respond for the sake of protecting their churches.[11]

There have been many attempts in the literature to define this term. John Mbiti gives the shortest definition : "...theological reflection and expression by African Christians."[12] But this definition overlooks the historical setting of the rise of "African Theology" definitely representing the attempt to emphasize the 'Africanness' of theological work in Africa, and thereby marginalizing the biblical, historical and doctrinal aspects of Christian theology. Kato identifies 'African Theology' with Philip Turner's definition: An "attempt to find points of similarity between Christian notions and those drawn from the traditional religions of Africa....and to amalgamate elements of Christian and elements of traditional beliefs."[13] Such a narrow definition would necessarily lead Kato to faulting such an approach for accommodating syncretism and heresy.[14]

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[11] A. M. Lugira, "African Christian Theology" ATJ 8/1 (1979) p. 56; D. Bosch, "Missionary Theology in Africa" JTSA 49 (12/1984); p. 19-20; J. Parratt: *Theologiegeschichte der Dritten Welt. Afrika.* München, 1991, p. 34-35. E. Fashole-Luke quotes from Idowu's address to participants of that Consultation, referring to the need for theological work to be done to the evangelistic(!) concern behind the calling for this Conference ("Footpaths and Signposts to African Christian Theologies" *Bulletin de Theologie Africaine* II/5 (1/1981), p. 25.

[12] "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theologies" AFER 7/2(1978) p. 83. In earlier writings he is more cautious with a definition. See in his *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background.* London, 1971; p. 185.

[13] B. Kato: *Theological Pitfalls in Africa.* Kisumu, Kenya, 1975; p. 55.

[14] Later evangelical scholars like Tite Tiénou or Kwame Bediako are wider in their approach of identifying 'African Theology', recognizing its apologetic motif in the sense of "legitimizing the existence of an indigenous African theology within the confines of Western Christianity," and defining it in line with J. Upkong's category of "African inculturation theology", thereby

Mbiti and Idowu do not fall under this category of 'African Theology' and Kato does not criticize them just on the ground of such a definition. But he sees the two involved in a theological movement , which overemphasizes the value of African culture and religions for the African Christian identity, running the danger of applying to the substance of the African religiosity the form of Christian vocabulary, and this mixed with certain liberal theological western concepts, coming in through the arm of AACC. In his writings, Mbiti obviously had set the presuppositions for his future theology: African theology was to build upon four "rich(!) sources": the Bible, the theology of the older churches, the African traditions and the present experiences of the church in Africa.[15] Such equalizing of the Scriptures with other authorities for an African Christian theology was alarming enough for Kato to become more and more critical of this "father of African Theology" as he calls him,[16] ending up in a harsh overall rejection of Mbiti's writings in the book *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1975). Kato even went so far as to question Mbiti's ability to understand African traditional religions adequately, because Mbiti had not been raised in a thoroughly traditional setting.[17]

It is indeed regrettable that this rough but inspiring beginning of theological dispute was not to be continued and improved, owing to the

distinguishing it from the other two categories of 'Black Theology' and 'Liberation Theology' (T. Tiénou, "Indigenous African Christian Theologies: The Uphill Road." IBMR 14/2 (4/1990) p. 74-75; K. Bediako describes the early theological work of Mbiti and Idowu as an honest attempt in a search for their own African Christian identity , but with divergent answers to that quest for identity. Mbiti' s answer is valued as a christo-centric one, and Idowu's answer as the claim that Christian belief can easily identify itself with the authentic revelatory substance of African religion ("The Roots of African Theology" IRMR 3/2 (4/1989); pp. 58-65).

[15] John Mbiti, "Afrikanischen Beiträge zur Christologie", *Theologische Stimmen* (Hg: Gensichen u.a.) Bd II, 1968, p. 72.

[16] B. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls* (1975); p. 56.

[17] Ibid., p. 60.

sudden death of Byang Kato, who tragically drowned while on holiday only ten days after a reconciliatory meeting with John Mbiti in December 1975. At that time, according to the report of Mbiti, Kato agreed to revise the wording of some of his judgements regarding Mbiti's writings, so that the two could part in peace with each other.[18]

C. International Polarization between Evangelicals and Ecumenicals

A third impact on the forming of African evangelical theology in the early 1970s was the involvement of the AEA leaders in the international evangelical movement of that time, which tended to distinguish itself from the global ecumenical movement. Kato himself was realistic enough to accept the fact of western theological influence on the African church scene, both for the ecumenical side as well as for the evangelical side.[19] He critically followed the theological development of fellow African students, who had returned from WCC-sponsored overseas studies and became leaders of the AACC. The more they identified with international ecumenical theology, the more he saw the proverb confirmed: "He who pays the piper dictates the tune." He continues: "It is unrealistic to expect so many students from the Third World to digest Aquinas, Tillich, or Cone,

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[18] J. Mbiti, "The Biblical Basis for Present Trends in African Theology" AFER 7/2 (1978) p. 85 . Mbiti himself declares his openness to correction of his theological approach in the article "Christianity and Traditional Religions in Africa" (in McGovern, editor. *Crucial Issues in Missions Tomorrow.* Vol III; Chicago, 1972; p.158): "I know that there are those who are ready to shout 'Syncretism! Syncretism!' in order to dismiss this concern (of inculturation), but who of us is free from syncretism, pride, prejudice and sheer obstinacy? Are we not prepared to let the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth...which ...will no doubt show us where we are or that we could be wrong in our approach to the question of religion in Africa?"

[19] "External forces from both ecumenical and evangelical movements outside of Africa have been a part of the history of the church in Africa. ...Thus fuel is provided for various theological convictions on the continent (of Africa)." B. Kato, "Theological Issues in Africa" Bibliotheca Sacra 133/530 (4-6/1976) p. 144.

and return home unaffected."[20] Of course, he would not exclude himself and other evangelical overseas students from this judgement. But this is his observation, that Africa in the 1960s and early 1970s had become the battlefield of influential strategies of international Christian bodies and church associations in their struggle for dominance in the young and growing African churches. And this battle, so he stated in his prophecy of February 1973, and reconfirmed in his *Pitfalls* of 1975, will be fought on theological grounds for the next two decades in the next generations.[21]

At its birth in 1966 the AEA had the two evangelical international mission organisations, the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) and the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA) as its midwives; or shall one say, its parents. They had established an "Africa Evangelical Office" in Nairobi in 1962, in part to protect the churches they had helped initiate in Africa from rising ecumenical influences.[22] The World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF, now WEA) joined them very soon after.[23] At the inaugural session of AEA in 1966 many expatriate missionaries were founding members. During these years the question of "American missions... exporting their own problems (of

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[20] B. Kato: *Theological Pitfalls*, p. 140.

[21] *Ibid.* Observe how he had to change his prediction in this instance from that in his speech of February 1973 at the AEA Assembly in Limuru, Kenya, where he spoke of only one decade of theological struggle. Now the1980s are included and the next generation!

[22] Some sources refer this event to 1961. (G. Okoronkwo: "Christian Partnership in Action". Afroscope 56 (»AEAM Silver Jubilee Special«; 9–10/1991), p. 6 and Kenneth L. Downing in "AEAM – History and Ministries", Nairobi/Kenya, ed. between 1988 and 1991, p. 4.). David Howard speaks of 1962 in *The Dream that would not Die. The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship. 1846-1986.* Exeter, 1986, p. 67. There were preparations in progress to set up the WCC supported ecumenical "All African Conference of Churches" (AACC) in 1963 in Kampala/Uganda.

[23] D. Howard, *The Dream* (1986); p. 67, 71-77.

ecumenical relationships) to Africa, ..." happened to be an issue of dispute between IFMA/EFMA and WEF.[24] So one can see that the early African evangelical leaders were working within a setting of international polarization between the ecumenical and evangelical movements, even in the midst of international evangelical tensions between North American mission bodies and the World Evangelical Fellowship. Such a field of discussion must have sensitized African theologians like Kato, who grew very soon into leadership responsibilities of WEF, and participation in the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. He was able to look into the "infallibility issue" , which occupied the WEF, when this body dealt with its relationship to the European Evangelical Alliance in 1968 and her moderate understanding of the infallibility of Scriptures.[25] Certainly those experiences had helped form his anti-hcretical and apologetic approach to theologizing in Africa.

Ecumenical conferences, such as the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Uppsala in 1968, and the eighth WCC International Mission Conference in Bangkok in 1972/1973, focusing as thcy did on "liberating" Third World churches from so called conservative, "old-fashioned" missionary theology added to the alarming feelings, which occupied Kato and the other participants of the 1973 AEA Assembly, and led them to push even more for an official evangelical theological strategy.

Kato analyzes convincingly the lines of growing influence from WCC on the All-Africa Conference of Churches, from AACC's formation in 1963 down to the 6 final resolutions of the AACC assembly held in Lusaka in 1974, which included the appeal to liberate themselves in the first place from "theological conservatism".[26] In addition to that confrontational attitude, if one imagines that the head offices of the AACC and the AEA wcre placed in the same city of Nairobi, one should not be surprised by the explosive ground on which the official theological work of the evangelicals

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[24] E.g. in Nov 1967; cf. Howard, *The Dream* (1986); p. 76.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 87-89.

[26] *Theological Pitfalls* (1975); p. 169.

in Africa started . But is such an emergency situation not an authentic basis for the development of biblical theology, if we compare it with the motifs behind the forming of theology in the times of the early church? David Bosch confirms: "...theology had no reason to exist other than to critically accompany the Church in its mission to the world, that theology was therefore, by definition, the product of an emergency situation."[27] Almost all evangelical theologians in Africa saw and see themselves in a situation parallel, for instance, to the struggle of Tertullian (160-220) with his 'Prescription against Heretics'.[28]

II. Early Leaders in African Evangelical Theology

A. Byang Kato

Byang Kato's initial role in the forming of African evangelical theology is evident, remembering his already mentioned involvement in the starting of a theological strategy within the framework of AEA.

Born in Nigeria in 1936, he became General Secretary of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) in Nigeria in 1966, General Secretary of AEA in 1973, soon afterwards Executive Secretary of the AEA Theological Commission, Vice-President of the World Evangelical Fellowship in 1974, and Chairman of the WEF Theological Commission in 1975.   No other evangelical leader around him produced the extent of conspicuous theological literature for the African setting as he did.[29]

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[27] D. Bosch: *Missionary Theology in Africa.* JTSA 49 (1984) p. 15.

[28] Tite Tiénou, "Issues in the Theological Task in Africa Today" AJET 1/1, 2 (1982) p. 5: "I think the majority of evangelicals would, at least in theory, agree with Tertullian."

[29] Even Osalodore Imasogie, Principal of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, who later published his *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (1983), did not deal in his early doctoral thesis of 1972 with African issues.

Kato's 1974 doctoral dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary in the United States, entitled "A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa," was published in book form in Nairobi in 1975 under the title, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa.* It was well received among African evangelical theologians and became the model for African evangelical theology in public awareness. It was indeed typical of Kato's theological concerns at that time in its apologetic and anti-heretical character, and it does reflect the above mentioned historical circumstances of the birth of official evangelical theology. Kato saw himself in the midst of world-wide growing theological tensions between evangelicals and ecumenicals. Serving in international evangelical functions he had to face personally the movements around the great international conferences, mainly the ones in Bangkok in 1972/73 and Lausanne in 1974, with their competitive focus on the Third World churches, not least in Africa. Those experiences shaped the content of his theological work in Africa to bear a polemic character.

He was a pastor and church leader, who wanted to protect his church from false teaching and preserve biblical Christianity in Africa. As a person he certainly stands for a theology grown within the life of the church rather than in some religio-philosophical realm of distant academic departments at universities. In his book, his concluding "Ten Point Proposal" for "Safeguarding Biblical Christianity in Africa" relates his theological purposes to the apologetic task and to practical problems of the church, like questions of polygamy, family structure, liturgy, spirit-world or the necessary training of church-leaders in the Scriptures, and the mandate of evangelism, and social concerns.[30] These points expose the real scope of his theological aspirations.

One should also not overlook his positive attempts to deal with African identity in culture and religion in articles like "Christianity as an African

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[30] *Theological Pitfalls*, pp. 182-183

Religion" or "African Cultural Revolution and Christian Faith."[31] Paul Bowers observes correctly that "*Pitfalls* is not Byang Kato's *magnum opus.*"[32] One must recognise that his initial theological contributions were just beginning to represent his intended profile for African evangelical theology in general. His sudden drowning accident at Mombasa at the end of 1975 tragically ended any further outlining of his theology.

What Kato did manage to accomplish before his untimely death was to set the stage for theological work among evangelicals; namely, by initiating the AEA Theological Commission, the AEA theological publication "Perception", laying the groundwork for founding the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), and the two AEA-sponsored post-graduate institutions, BEST in the Central African Republic and NEGST in Kenya. These endeavours represent a considerable legacy.

B. Tite Tiénou and Tokunboh Adeyemo
We will focus on these two theologians in this article, because they in particular added to Kato's work other fundamental aspects in the forming of African evangelical theology.

Tiénou, supported later by the Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako, attempted a more constructive evaluation, by acknowledging African Theology's apologetic motif against Western Christian theologies with their devaluation of African culture and religion, and by attributing to people like Mbiti and Idowu an honest personal interest in clarifying the serious

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[31] B. Kato, *Biblical Christianity* (1985), p. 32-39; the article "African Cultural Revolution and Christian Faith" (Jos, Nigeria, 1976) is referred to in K. Bediako's article "The Roots of African Theology", IBMR 13/2 (1989), p. 58-65, as Kato's attempt "to address the (African) identity question" (p. 62).

[32] P. Bowers, "Evangelical Theology in Africa: Byang Kato's Legacy" ERT 5/1 (4/1981) p. 36

question of African identity and selfhood by means of an experimental inculturation theology.[33]

Tite Tiénou grew up in Burkina Faso, was a pastor and lecturer there and overseas in theology and missiology, and became the successor of Kato as head of the AEA Theological Commission (1977-1987), and Chairman of ACTEA. He concludes his "Historical Review of Evangelical Theological Strategy in Africa" with the remark: "Dr. Kato has done the groundwork for us; where and how shall we go from there?"[34] He indeed must have felt himself obliged to the theological legacy of Kato. He enthusiastically paints a picture of Kato as the integrative figure in the rise of evangelical theology in the AEA setting. Indeed, he expounded his view of the theological task of the evangelical church in Africa initially as part of his "Byang H. Kato Memorial Lectures" given in 1978 at Igbaja in Nigeria.[35]

Tiénou's main concern is keeping academic theology close to the "grass-roots church life", and to relate the "search for theological identity to worship and prayer life of the African churches."[36] He observes a "gap between academic and popular theology" and wants to implement a "third way in African theology", paved for the local pastor. In doing this, he helps the pastor to ground his shaky popular theology on "sound scriptural interpretation" and proper contextual theology.[37] It is indeed around this

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[33] See note 14 above for reference.

[34] T. Tiénou: "The Theological Task of the Church in Africa", Achimota, Ghana 1982; p. 16.

[35] *Ibid.,* p. 1.

[36] T. Tiénou, "Indigenous African Christian Theologies: The Uphill Road" IBMR 14/2 (1990) p. 73 and 77.

[37] T. Tiénou, "The Theological Task of the Church in Africa: Where are we now and where should we be Going?" *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 6/1 (1987) p. 6-7. Tiénou finds support in Isadolore Imasogie's article

church-based perspective where evangelical theologians could and should cultivate their *'proprium'*.

David Bosch evaluated Tiénou's contribution to the African theological enterprise with the impression that he "is an evangelical theologian worth watching."[38] Tiénou's dissertation on "The Problem of Methodology in African Christian Theologies" (Fuller, 1984) is another asset to evangelical theology in Africa because it offers a significant alternative methodology to the ones of Mbiti, Tshibangu, Pobee and Sanon. He does this by purposely limiting the contextual approach to three elements for methodological considerations: the church, the cultural and religious aspects of her surrounding local community, and the biblical revelation, which has the overall control over the hermeneutical process within such specific contexts.[39]

Tokunboh Adeyemo of Nigeria, Kato's successor as General Secretary of AEA, and later Chairman of the WEF Executive Council, has introduced another facet to the forming of African evangelical theology. His emphasis is on shaping theology by conscious encounter with the challenge of African Islam and Catholicism.[40] Having been raised in a strong Muslim tradition in Nigeria, Adeyemo is perhaps predestined to work out an evangelical theology related more directly to the actual social African context. He initiated the establishment of the AEA Department on Ethics, Society and Development in 1984 and its publication "Afrethics".

"The Church in Theological Ferment in Africa," where it is said that the "church must become the centre of theological instruction and discussion" ERT 9 (1985) p. 369.

[38] D. Bosch, "Missionary Theology in Africa" JTSA 49 (12/1984) p. 23.

[39] T. Tiénou: "The Problem of Methodology in African Christian Theologies," unpublished dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary, USA. 1984; pp. ii and iii.

[40] T. Adeyemo: *Salvation in African Tradition* (1979); p. 12.

He is also an editor of *Transformation,* the specialist journal for "International Evangelical Dialogue on Mission and Ethics".[41]

III. Identity of African Evangelical Theology

A. The AEA Context

The major life setting for the profile of African evangelical theology relates to the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), and to AEA's official representatives (until 1993 AEA was known as AEAM, the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar). But there are now other influential evangelical theologians like Kwame Bediako or David Gitari, who have been only loosely connected with the AEA community, but were linked with initiatives of the WEF Theological Commission and should therefore be considered as contributors to the forming of African evangelical theology. I include here also theologians who hold official positions within member churches of national AEA member bodies, like the then Principal of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, Osadolor Imasogie, who wrote a very essential book on evangelical theology in Africa,[42] or others like Gottfried Osei Mensah from Ghana, who was the travelling secretary of the African Fellowship of Evangelical Students before becoming the first General Secretary of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization.

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[41] Published by the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT), which links the Latin American Theological Fraternity, the Africa Theological Fellowship, and Partnership in Mission Asia. Edited in Wynnewood/PA/USA.

[42] Osadolor Imasogie: *Guidelines for Christian theology in Africa.* Achimota, Ghana; 1983. The Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomosho, Nigeria, is the leading official institution for theological education of the Baptist Convention in Nigeria, which is a member of the evangelical Alliance in Nigeria.

Christina Breman's book on the AEA[43] provides helpful background information on the key theologians of the AEA: Kato, Adeyemo and Tiénou. The book offers detailed biographies and her bibliographical survey of these evangelical theologians is of high value, since she also tried to give brief abstracts of their literature. Breman's book is an important source for the historical background of the beginnings of African evangelical theology. Furthermore, she offers a helpful analysis of the links between IFMA and EFMA and the roots of the AEA(M).[44]

Her short survey of the writings of Kato and Adeyemo concentrates only on their contribution to the message of the AEA. It is to be noted that she confines the message of AEA to the theological profile of Kato and Adeyemo, because they were the General Secretaries of AEA. On this ground she views the theology of the AEA as an apologetic theology against the liberal ecumenical theology, and against an "African Theology" too intermingled with African traditional religions. An interesting comparison between Kato and Adeyemo leads Breman to the observation that Adeyemo developed Kato's theology towards a contextual theology, and that Adeyemo showed more openness to pentecostal views. This observation is confirmed in the present author's book on African evangelical theology, *Afrikanische Evangelikale Theologie. Plädoyer für das ganze Evangelium im Kontext Afrikas.*[45]

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[43] Christina Breman: *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa. Its History, Organisation, Members, Projects, External Relations, and Message.* Zoetermeer (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum), 1996.

[44] The two North American evangelical mission associations IFMA (Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association) and EFMA (Evangelical Foreign Missions Association; since 1991 Evangelical Fellowship of Missions Agencies) initiated the founding of an African Evangelical office in Nairobi in 1962 in counteraction to a theological scholarship programme of the ecumenical AACC. Breman, *The Association of Evangelicals*, p. 7-19.

[45] Detlef Kapteina: *Afrikanische Evangelikale Theologie. Plädoyer für das ganze Evangelium im Kontext Afrikas.* Nürnberg (VTR); 2001; p. 35-36. Adeyemo's rising interest in a charismatic impact on church life and theology can be seen in his joining and becoming an elder of the Nairobi Pentecostal Church (Kato had been a member and elder of the Nairobi Baptist Church), and in his emphasis on the importance of the Holy

Besides the activities of AEA, there had been another widely recognized movement in Africa which grew out of the enthusiasm experienced at the 1974 Lausanne International Conference on World Evangelisation in Lausanne in 1974. This movement resulted in the Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly (PACLA) held in Nairobi in December 1976, with Gottfried Osei-Mensah as Chairman and other African evangelical leaders like Festo Kivengere and Tite Tiénou as main speakers. After settlement of some preliminary misunderstandings in the planning phase, AEA leaders were able to cooperate together.[46] Some reviewers of the history of theology in Africa state that participants at this assembly had announced this conference to be the starting point of evangelical "African Theology".[47]

This article argues for another view of the time and the context regarding the beginning of African evangelical theology. It makes more sense to relate African evangelical theology to the official organs of African evangelicalism. Moreover, the PACLA initiators themselves denied this "historic" view. Such notions result rather from a lack of thorough research on the evangelical presence in Africa. However, since AEA representatives did support the evangelistic enterprise of PACLA, it certainly has to be considered as one factor in the forming of African evangelical theology. The "PACLA theology" is to be considered as an

Spirit's leading role in the work and person of the theologian. (T. Adeyemo: "Towards an Evangelical African Theology" ERT VII//1(1983); p. 147. Cf. Kapteina, *Afrikanische Evangelikale Theologie*; pp. 175-176 und 242). The increasing openness to the work of the Holy Spirit is also indicated in the preamble of the AEA constitution (1993), which refers the founding of the AEA to the "prompting of the Holy Spirit".

[46] In the beginning AEA leaders had some problems with the acceptance of two invited speakers, John Mbiti and John Gatu (who had emphatically supported the idea of "Moratorium" in Bangkok). See open letter of AEA representatives of 29 June 1976 in Nairobi.

[47] H. Rücker, *'Afrikanische Theologie'. Darstellung und Dialog*. Insbruck, 1987; p. 65. , referring to a report of G.E. Stoll: "Trommel und schwarze Hand". Evangelikale Afrikaner tagen in Nairobi. In: Evangelische Kommentare 10/2 (2/1977); p. 93-95. Cf : Fr. Kollbrunner: Auf dem Weg zur afrikanischen Theologie. In: G. Collet (Ed.): *Theologie der Dritten Welt. EATWOT als Herausforderung der westlichen Theologie und Kirche*. Immensee, 1990; p. 49, 50.

essential aspect in the early development of African evangelical theology. It extended Kato's concern for a Bible-centred and Christ-centred theology to a holistic theological approach. PACLA began to develop an evangelical contextual theology, which emphasized the relevance of the Gospel not only in the realm of culture and religion but also in the context of the modern African's social and physical needs and socio-political life-setting. By inviting John Mbiti to the conference, the PACLA leaders also made first steps away from Kato's rather polemic and defensive criticism against non-evangelical African theologians towards a critical but constructive dialogue with them.

B. Defining the terms

I found three sources of African provenance where an explicit definition of African evangelical theology has been attempted. The earliest is from Tite Tiénou in the booklet *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa*, which contains his lectures during the 'Byang H. Kato Memrial Lectures' in 1978. To him "evangelicalism is the description of those committed to the historic Protestant understanding of the Gospel," and evangelicals are "those Christians who are committed to the authority of the Word of God as their 'rule of faith and practice.'"[48] Concurrently, Tiénou's understanding of theology is "the reasoned statement of biblical revelation which makes possible the transmission of the Christian faith to the future generations." To clarify his conception he uses the picture of the Christian faith being a beautiful song, to which the biblical revelation is given for the words of this song and the theology for the music and rhythm.[49]

The other source is the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (AJET; titled until 1989 the *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*), published since 1982 in Kijabe by Scott Theological College. The editor at that time, Isaac Simbiri, writes in the second issue (1983) on the question 'What is African evangelical theology?' He points to three basic elements in the following priority list: 1. African evangelical theology has to be based

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[48] T. Tiénou, *The Theological Task* (1982); pp 7-8.

[49] *ibid.*, p. 10.

on the "Lordship of Jesus Christ over the powers of this world"; 2. African evangelical theology has to be "committed to the Word of God and (!) the Spirit of God as the only reliable guide to understanding the truth about the Lordship of Christ"; 3. African evangelical theology has to apply "biblical, Christ-centred faith to life in Africa", summarizing that African evangelical theology is "simply evangelical theology applied to the African context."[50] He refers to the African part of the Seoul Declaration, 1982, which relates issues like traditional African world view, the reality of the Spirit-world, competing ideologies, Islam, and contemporary cultural, political and religious struggles to the African context, and urges evangelical theologians in Africa to participate in the "quest for human identity in the context of the dehumanizing history of colonial exploitation, tribal feud and racial discrimination."[51] One observes already the widened range of the theological task, certainly influenced by issues which evangelicals in Latin America and South Africa have had to face.

Tokunboh Adeyemo wrote an article "Towards an Evangelical African Theology" (1983), obviously using the term 'African Theology' in a neutral sense. His definition is based on the understanding that evangelicals are "Bible-believing Christians" living in "a personal dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord" and draws from there a line to evangelical theology as "an obedient Spirit-led reflection upon God's revelatory words and acts, culminating in Jesus Christ, an honest application of the same to our lives, and consequent sincere communication of it for perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry."[52] I quote this whole definition, because it accurately describes the theological process in three stages: Spirit-led reflection, application to life, and communication in the church. His priority list takes the Bible concern first, followed by

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[50] AJET 2/1 (1983) pp. 1-2.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 3. Cf.: "The Seoul Declaration: Toward an Evangelical Theology for the Third World" (1982) IBMR 7/1 (1/1983) p. 3.

[52] T. Adeyemo, "Towards an Evangelical African Theology" *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7/1 (1983) p. 147.

commitment to the Lordship of Christ, the supremacy of the Holy Spirit, spiritual discipline of the theologian (prayer), and integration within the interaction and dialogue of the community of the believers.

Looking at those three contemporary sources of identifying evangelical theology in Africa, it becomes evident that they build on Kato's understanding of theology to define and defend the church's doctrinal position and to excel in *biblical* scholarship, even going as far as to accept "the need to deepen his [the African evangelical's] historic roots in the Western stream of creedal and doctrinal development."[53] But one sees also a development to a wider range of the theological task which lays more emphasis on Christology than 'bibliology', on pneumatology, and on contextuality. In the summary phrase which is typical for Kato, namely 'biblical Christianity', if perhaps the accent in that phrase had initially been on the first word, *'biblical* Christianity', then the accent had gradually shifted to accent the name of *Christ,* to 'biblical *Christ*ianity'.

C. "African Fundamentalism" ?

Finally we must take into account the perspective of theologians outside official evangelical circles, as they identify and describe African evangelical theology. The term "African evangelical theology" in itself is not used at all. Even the term "evangelical" is a rarity when they mention one or other evangelical theologian. The mark of fundamentalism is preferred.

Among the few theological surveys or historical reviews which notice literature of evangelicals, the most objective one is by David Bosch. His article "Missionary Theology in Africa"(1984) respects the wording that evangelicals use for themselves, calling the authors he selected "Protestant evangelical theologians" (Kato, Adeyemo, and Tiénou) and taking their work seriously as a real alternative theological perspective opposite to the exponents of 'African Theology'. He sees them, too, "sharing one concern:

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[53] AJET Vol 1 (1982) p. 1 and AJET 6/2 (1987) p. 1.

to develop an authentic and relevant African Christianity and theology..."[54] He recommends especially Tite Tiénou as an "evangelical theologian worth watching."[55]

The majority of scholars referring to evangelical presence in Africa move quickly to a devaluing fundamentalistic notion. John Parratt in his *Theologiegeschichte der Dritten Welt. Africa* (1991) sees here a North American import, and stigmatizes people like Kato with the judgement of mere "Wiederholung der Position einer bestimmten Ausprägung des westlichen Christentums" ("repeating the position of a certain type of Western Christianity"), which means that such persons are unable to make a specific African theological contribution. But Parratt is fair enough to admit that Kato's book contains important observations. For example, he welcomes the fact that Kato urges the centrality of Christ as the critical factor in the theological inculturation process.[56]

Edward Fashole-Luke is more supportive, even though he speaks of 'Biblical Fundamentalists', characterized by an "uncritical approach to Scripture". But in the same paragraph he can continue with the remark that they "underline a basic feature of the Christian faith...: the uniqueness and finality of Christ's revelation..."[57] He sees the evangelicals at least as one of

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[54] D. Bosch, "Missionary Theology in Africa" JTSA 49 (12/1984) p. 23. D. N. Wambutda , too, takes it as a matter of course to list the books of Kato and Adeyemo among all the other renowned African theologians in "the quest for a Christian African Theology". D.N. Wambutda, "Savannah Theology: A Biblical Consideration of the Concept of Salvation in the African Context" *Bulletin de Theologie Africaine* III / 6 (7-12/1981) p. 137.

[55] D. Bosch: Missionary Theology ...(1987) p. 23.

[56] John Parratt: *Theologiegeschichte der Dritten Welt. Afrika.* München, 1991; p. 99.

[57] E.Fashole-Luke, "The Quest for African Christian Theologies" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 29 (1976); p. 166.

"three major streams" of theologians in Africa, namely those who take the Bible as a "primary and basic source for...African Christian theologies."[58]

H. Rücker argues that such a predominant "biblicistic fundamentalism" in a theology seems to be mainly concerned with an alternative hermeneutical approach than forming a specific theology. Nevertheless, he too respects the emphasis of this "einflussreiche Strömung im Christentum Afrikas" ("influential movement within African Christanity") on the uniqueness of the biblical message and its critique of philosophical and religious idolatry in Africa.[59] The Catholic observers of the African theological scene in the Dutch periodical 'Exchange' always deal with the evangelicals in a way of critical sympathy. The evangelical view is appreciated and taken as an acceptable critical opposition to the ecumenical position.[60]

Conclusion

In observing the initial stage and some further developments in the forming of African evangelical theology, we may refer to one of Byang Kato's favourite expressions, which he mentions twice in his writings. The first emphasis, which appears in Kato's book on *African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith*: "Let *African* Christians be *Christian* Africans!",[61] lays stress on biblical authenticity and priority for African Christianity. The same wording, but with different emphasis, occurs again as the conclusion of a notable address he delivered once at a large

[58] *ibid.*, p. 165 –166.

[59] H. Rücker, *'Afrikanische Theologie'* (1987); p. 64, 65.

[60] E.J Schoonhoven, "The Bible in Africa" *EXCHANGE* 9/25 (4/1980) p. 42ff: The Evangelicals: Biblical Theology in an African Context. M.R. Spindler: Struggling for the Liberation of Ecumenism: Ecumenical Theology in the Third World. In EXCHANGE 14 (9/1976) p. 20f., 31ff: Referring to B. Kato and his "evangelical model: Unity with the Bible"(p. 31)

[61] B. Kato: *African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith*. Jo, Nigeria, 1976; p. 51. Italics by Kato.

Bowers, saying: "Let African Christians be Christian *Africans!*",[62] underlining the necessity of an indigenized Christian theology for Africa. African evangelical theologians like him and several of his successors have helped the evangelical churches of Africa to grow towards that end.

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BOOK REVIEWS

H. VAN DER LAAN, A.H. DE GRAAFF, H.H. VAN BRUMMELEN et al.

The Ideal of Christian Schools.

Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformation Studies, 1997 (80 pages).

The book contains five chapters written by different authors. No much background information is provided of the authors except for their addresses.

Chapter one, which is entitled "Out of Concern for the Christian School," calls on the institutions to understand who they are in terms of their worldview and how they relate with the society and its civilization. It is true that a society has a variety of life, worldview, ideologies, religions and philosophies. In addition, there are various institutions in the society, which include marriage, family, church, state, university, school, trade union, club, association, factory, and political party among others. H. Van Der Laan, in this chapter has given different views prevalent to the society forms. He uses the Roman Catholic perspective whereby God has given man a supernatural institution, which is the church where man finds his destination.

Religion is one of the concerns. As humans our reality has a religious dimension, which determines the structure and nature of our cosmos that centers on God, the creator. The author explains aspects of freedom responsibility in the framework of religion, in the sense that we have the freedom from sin with a responsibility to fulfill God's will.

H. Van Der Laan in chapter one has also discussed the characteristics of modern society, mostly on western civilization known as the American-European civilization. He outlines reasons for the choice to discuss this civilization bearing in mind that other civilizations exist. Of interest is the write up on the character of the school education. The author has only given the 19th century education preferred by people in power, for political reasons. He goes further to discuss the Christian school movement. His argument is that, all education is rooted in the covenant of God with man, and the work of salvation.

School being one of the institutions used to achieve the purposes of education. There are fundamental questions concerning this that are worth wrestling with.

The second chapter of the book is on, "The Nature and Aim of Christian Education," written by A. H. de Graaff. He begins by giving anthropological presuppositions, which he argues are foundational to the educational principles, teaching techniques and curricula. I do disagree with him in his view of good teaching being "a matter of skillfully manipulating a system of rewards and punishment" (p. 40). Defining education, he goes ahead to caution educators to take seriously the guiding and nurturing of learners, respecting the religious selfhood of man. His objective for Christian education is clearly pointed out that "the religious calling of man is to love God with all his heart and his neighbors as himself" (p. 44). To achieve this, there is need for radical discipleship.

The last three chapters of the book provide information of the Christian schools in the English- speaking nations particularly United States of America, Canada, and in South Africa. H. W. van Brummelen in chapter three discusses briefly types and views concerning Christian schools. The five types are given more in terms of the characteristic of each. First is 'the Christ of culture,' Christ and culture in paradox, Christ against culture, the Christ the transformer of culture. Examples for each are also provided. This is followed by discussion of the five types of the Christian schools, in the English-speaking world mostly in America. A few highlights are given on the challenges facing the Christian schools, the various organizations that have been formed to work towards unity regarding Christian schooling. The challenge of curriculum development is also mentioned.

Looking into the Christian schools in Canada, the author in chapter four points out that the leadership's understanding of the role of Christians in culture characterize the school's program. Despite this, there are two major kinds of Christian schools, firstly, those that see Christ and Christian beliefs as opposed to society and its customs; and secondly, those that work towards the transformation of culture. The author realizes that the kinds of schools fall more on a continuum than the two broad categories.

M.R. Davidson in chapter five gives the context of South Africa, which at the time of writing, was faced with challenges heightened by the continuing development of the South Africa education system. Though the Provisional Constitution valued independent schooling and acknowledged the schools' right

to operate, subsidy cuts was a problem. The implementation of the constitution was to have implications on the independent schools whether Christian or denominational and home schooling. Worth to mention that the Christian schools have to wrestle with diverse issues for the smooth running of their schools.

The book in itself provides a survey into various issues in relation to Christian schooling. Though more of a pamphlet, it is vital that Christian schooling has to be put in its rightful perspective as the authors have done by first raising the need for Christian schools. Christian schooling is best understood when the objectives of Christian education have been brought out, and this is what is given in chapter two. Looking at the foundation of education from a biblical perspective, with its foundation on the word of God, is what every Christian school needs to adhere to.

Though the authors have given anthropological presuppositions from various perspectives, the reader has to be critical in reading such sections. At the same time, it is good to be conversant with different perspectives.

In terms of the book's relevancy for the ministry in Africa, the reader will benefit from the principles since the western understanding of Christian schooling is different from that in the Kenyan context for example. Beside the public schools and colleges, the education system in Kenya has the private schools and colleges, which have to adhere to the rules and regulations of the ministry of education. The first two chapters of the book are most resourceful especially to the Christian educators in the African context. Putting Christian education in its proper perspective and implementation of the same requires an understanding of the societal forms, and the objectives of Christian education as one is faced with different challenges in the 21st century scholarship and ministry.

The last pages of the book give a bibliography of compiled materials related to Christian schooling.

Rachel C. Mutai
Scott Theological College
Machakos, Kenya

Johannes Launhardt

Evangelicals in Addis Ababa (1919-1991), with Special Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Addis Ababa Synod

Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004. 347 pages, paperback, ISBN: 3825877914

In this published form of his 2004 University of Hamburg dissertation, Johannes Launhardt traces the growth and development of the Evangelical movement in the capital of Ethiopia between 1919 and 1991. Although the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) remained dominant, early 20th Century Addis Ababa was religiously diverse with both Jewish and Muslim communities as well as adherents to traditional religions, particularly in outlying areas. Within this religious diversity, Evangelicals formed a slim minority – only an estimated 100 Ethiopians publicly professed Protestant faith in 1910. Some of these early Evangelicals had been influenced by a small reform group within the EOC, known as the Evangelical Association, which had its roots in the 17th Century influence of the German Lutheran doctor Peter Heyling in the royal court at Gondar. As with Heyling, those Protestant missions that worked in Ethiopia in the 19th Century did not attempt to form Evangelical churches or denominations but sought instead to effect renewal within the Orthodox Church – not least by promoting the study of Scripture through vernacular Bible translation – in the hope of slowing the progress of Islam in the wider region. This situation changed with the formation of the first Evangelical congregation in Addis Ababa in 1921. The change came with the arrival of a number of Evangelical believers from Eritrea. These believers had been forced out of the Orthodox Church in Eritrea and their presence in Eritrea had been made

increasingly untenable by the Italian colonial government there. Prior to their arrival, the Swedish missionary Karl Cederqvist had worked in Addis Ababa beginning in 1904 but had been forbidden by the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) to proselytize among the Orthodox. Nevertheless, after the death of Cederqvist in 1919, the SEM compound in Addis Ababa, where Cederqvist had operated a school, practiced medicine, and conducted weekly preaching services, was the location of the first Evangelical congregation, which later became the Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Church. The membership of this church was made up primarily of Evangelicals who had fled Eritrea, one of whom became the first pastor of the church.

Between 1919 and the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936, the SEM was joined by seven other Protestant missions in Addis Ababa. None of these undertook evangelistic outreach in Addis Ababa. Of the ten missions who were working in Ethiopian prior to the Italian invasion, four continued the predominant 19th Century Protestant practice of attempting to work toward renewal within the Orthodox Church. The others deferred to the Ethiopian government's wishes that the Protestant missions restrict their evangelistic activities to areas, which the government deemed non-Christian, primarily in the South. Nevertheless, the various missions did commence a variety of educational, medical and social programmes in the capital. Outside the capital, the Protestant missions attempted to form Protestant congregations, but met only limited success. By the time of the Italian occupation, there were scarcely more than 1,000 Ethiopians who openly professed Evangelical faith – only 200 in Addis Ababa. Very few of these were the result of evangelistic efforts in the capital.

No attempt was made to form a national Evangelical denomination, but the denominational and national diversity reflected in the various missions did create early fault lines, particularly on the question of baptism: Presbyterian and Lutheran missionaries did not re-baptize those who had been baptized as infants in the Orthodox Church, while Baptist missionaries insisted that all adults be baptized, including those that had been baptized as infants within the Orthodox Church. By far the most successful of the missions in the early period was the Church Mission to

Jews (CMJ) which first entered Ethiopia in 1859. Unlike other missions, the CMJ did not maintain even an administrative presence in Addis Ababa, but focused their work on communities of Ethiopian Falasha Jews in the North. By the time of the Italian occupation, the CMJ claimed 10,000 Falasha converts. However, despite their evangelical convictions, these converts from the Ethiopian Beta Israel were directed into the EOC, a policy which had been agreed between the CMJ and the Ethiopian government as the basis of the permission to work in the North. After expatriate CMJ missionaries were expelled in 1868 by Emperor Tewodros, CMJ work was continued primarily by Ethiopians who as boys had been raised by CMJ missionaries.

This pattern of growth through the outreach initiatives of Ethiopians continued during the Italian occupation. Despite the fact that the work of most Protestant missions was effectively ended by the Italian occupation and Ethiopian Evangelicals were subject to persecution, by the end of the occupation the number of evangelicals had increased from 1,000 to 20,000. After the Italian occupation the growth continued at a rapid pace, reaching 100,000 by the early 1950s. The period immediately following the occupation was marked also by consideration of what role that returning missionaries might play. In 1945 the elders of the Evangelical Congregation which had met for many years on the compound of the SEM wrote a letter to Stockholm expressing their thanks to SEM but indicating also that they could now do the congregational work in Addis Ababa without missionary assistance. They requested also the transfer of the lower part of the SEM compound to the church, a request with which SEM was happy to comply. To this point, no evangelical denomination had formed and the evidence points toward close cooperation between the six different evangelical congregations that existed in Addis during the Italian occupation. Out of this cooperation emerged the Conference of Ethiopian Evangelical Churches (CEEC), which first convened in 1944. The CEEC worked out "Spiritual and Temporal Statutes for the Evangelical Church" which was intended to govern practical matters related to the admission of members, marriage, betrothals, weddings and wedding feasts. One reason for convening the CEEC was to plan the formation of a united

evangelical Church. The CEEC in 1947 was attended not only by representatives of the congregations associated with the SEM and other Reformed missions but also by SIM-background believers from Kambata and members of the Society of the Followers of the Apostles. This latter group was associated with the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society, a British mission group with the stated policy of working within the Ethiopian Orthodox Society. Launhardt suggests that their presence at the 1947 CEEC indicates that at this stage there were persons within the CEEC "who were open to shape the Evangelical Church in Ethiopia as a reformed version of the Orthodox Church."

Neither the vision of a single united evangelical Church nor of a reformed version of the Orthodox Church was to be realized. From Launhardt's perspective, the alienation of believers with evangelical convictions from the Orthodox church was the result of resistance of the established church of the empire to change. Though many evangelicals as well as many Protestant missions indicated a willingness to work for reform from within the Orthodox church, "when reading the Bible in a language other than Ge'ez was called heresy, when the saving role of Jesus Christ, as laid down in the New Testament, was replaced by teaching that the Virgin Mary and Saints mediate for the salvation of humankind, and... the Cult of the Holy Cross and St. Mary were given a central place in the Church, when the children of evangelical believers were no longer baptized in the Orthodox Church, and when local priests refused to officiate at the funerals of Bible Readers, there was no other way but to look for new possibilities and structures to worship God, to receive the sacraments and have the dead buried in a Christian way."

The attempt to form a single united evangelical national Church for Ethiopia collapsed, primarily because proposals which would have taken the Church toward organisational and confessional unity were never implemented. The formulation of a common confessional basis became increasingly difficult as evangelical Christians became increasingly attuned to the doctrinal differences which existed between foreign missionaries. When a CEEC committee made up of ten Ethiopians and five missionaries – notably lacking any representation from SIM or SIM-related churches – proposed a confessional basis, it was the

Lutheran catechism. This was unacceptable to believers from Presbyterian background (though Presbyterian and Lutheran background believers later merged into a single denomination), and the idea of a common doctrinal basis was abandoned. Because the plans of the CEEC to set up joint training programmes were not implemented, missionaries who returned after the end of the Italian occupation quickly moved to fill a clear need for training. Naturally these training programmes inculcated the doctrinal distinctives of the various missions. It must also be stated that some splintering had already taken place, as in Kambata where SIM-background believers split over the permissibility of drinking of *borde*, a traditional alcoholic beverage, and over the question of baptism. All of this may suggest a need to qualify somewhat the assessment of Dr. Emmanuel Gebre Sellassie, a key leader of the CEEC and later of the Mekane Yesus Church, who insisted that "As long as we Ethiopian Evangelicals were among ourselves, we were one. When the different missionaries with their different teachings came back, we were divided." Still it must be said that in the period before and during the Italian occupation, the Evangelical movement within Ethiopia remained remarkably unified. However, apart from those missions who strove to work within the Orthodox Church, it does not appear that other organisations, notably including the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and SIM, shared the Ethiopian vision for a single united evangelical Churçh.

Much of the rest of Launhardt's book focuses on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), which was formed with a distinctively Lutheran identity in 1958. The LWF had been tracking the development of the Ethiopian Churches through a cooperative council of Lutheran missions working in Ethiopia known as the Lutheran Missions Committee, itself an initiative of the LWF. The LWF wanted Ethiopian representation at the first All-Africa Lutheran Conference in 1955 and a delegation was sent. This was a new experience for the Ethiopians in the delegation: "On the one hand it was new to them that they were supposed to be Lutheran Christians and not Evangelicals, on the other hand, they realized that there were many Lutheran Churches in Africa and that the LWF represented a world-wide family."

Launhardt provides an important treatment of relationship between the EECMY and the various missions to which member congregations were associated. Though it took the better part of a decade, an agreement on full integration was reached in 1969, according to which all property, programmes and institutions of the missions were transferred to and registered in the name of the EECMY. Launhardt himself played a key role in the development of this policy of full church-mission integration, and this involvement doubtless informs his rather critical assessment of the policy of SIM and, for a time, of the American United Presbyterian Mission, according to which church and mission should work together but as parallel and independent organisations. Because the administrative burden of running its various educational, medical and social institutions was regarded as too heavy for the national church, SIM did not prioritize the training of national leadership. Thus, mission-run schools only went up to the fourth grade. In Launhardt's view, the fact that SIM's property and institutions remained its own led directly to the loss of valuable assets to the church when the Communist government which rose forced SIM to cede their institutions to the government. Though Launhardt's criticisms are not without merit, it should be noted that the policy of independent partnership need not rule out an emphasis on leadership training, an emphasis evident in SIM-Ethiopia today for example. Further, the fact that various mission properties and institutions were transferred to EECMY did not keep many of these from being confiscated during the communist period.

The population of Addis Ababa doubled during the 1960s, reaching more than a million people by the time of the Marxist revolution in 1974. The resulting urban problems became a pronounced focus for the EECMY during this period as the Church undertook a multitude of social programmes, including schools, orphanages and literacy programmes. Remarkably, between 1962 and 1975, the EECMY's literacy campaign trained more than one million people. The Addis Ababa synod alone operated eighty-eight literacy schools, more than half in Addis. This focus on integral mission came about in part through the EECMY's broad circulation of the document, "On the Interrelation between the Proclamation of the Gospel and Human Development."

The focus on ministering to human need continued through the Marxist period despite repression and persecution. Many EECMY congregations were closed and its four-story central office was confiscated. A particularly tragic incident was the extra-judicial kidnapping and murder of EECMY general secretary and Addis Ababa synod president, Gudina Tumsa, after he had refused to join a tour to Europe which the Ethiopian government had organised as a way of proving to the West that Ethiopians enjoyed religious freedom. His wife was subsequently imprisoned for eight years. As with the Italian occupation, the difficulties experienced by Christians under the Marxist Derg regime proved nevertheless to be a time in which the Church grew and matured.

All who are interested in the remarkable development of the Evangelical community in Ethiopia during the 20th Century as a particularly notable example of the wider growth of Christianity in Africa will find Launhardt a capable and insightful chronicler. Along the way, readers will also find much to ponder in Launhardt's analysis of the circumstances – rather unique in Africa – in which Evangelicalism developed in a country long dominated by the Orthodox Church. If the impact of Evangelicalism on the Orthodox Church and on the broader society was not one of thoroughgoing renewal in the 20th Century, and its impact on Islam during that period minimal at best, one can nevertheless hope that the astounding numerical growth of Evangelicalism in Ethiopia will have a growing impact in the Horn of Africa in the century to come.

Steve Bryan
Ethiopia Graduate School of Theology
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia