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# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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**Purpose:** *AJET* is published twice a year by Scott Theological College, a chartered private university in Kenya, in order to provide theological educators and students with evangelical articles and book reviews related to Christian ministry in Africa.

**Publisher:** Scott Theological College, the publisher of *AJET*, has been accredited by ACTEA since 1979 and was chartered as a private university by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) Kenya in November 1997. Scott offers university level theological education with concentrations in Pastoral Studies, Christian Education and Missiology.

**AJET** is indexed in *Christian Periodical Index*; *New Testament Abstracts* (Cambridge MA); *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago; *Theology in Context* (Institute of Missiology, Germany); and in *DIALOG Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). *AJET* is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, E-mail: [atla@atla.com](mailto:atla@atla.com), Website: <http://www.atla.com/>. *AJET* articles and information can be found on the web by searching “evangelical theology”.

## An AJET Editorial: Seeking Your Response

Despite the fact that the calendar year is 2012 and this AJET issue is dated in 2010, we are striving to catch up to our ideal production schedule. But even working on AJET every day doesn't seem to result in swift progress, especially as we try to correct our mistakes (well, my mistakes) and learn how to avoid repeating them. To name all those who helped with the improvements would fill this space, but Paul Bowers heads the list and Karen Mitchell is why you're actually reading this! She has updated the subscription lists and mailed out the journals. Please continue to be patient as AJET regains its momentum.

The first two articles in this issue of AJET insist that having the Bible in our own Mother Tongue is not enough. Christian workers in Africa need a good pastoral education in their own language. Jim Harries, *The Prospects for Mother Tongue Theological Education in Western Kenya*, very forcefully argues for the value and necessity of Mother Tongue theological education, especially if African Bible Colleges are ever to shed their dependence on foreign funds. In my response, I come at the same topic from a different, but compatible, direction. This radical proposal should provoke a response!

Robert Lang'at's article on *Holiness Historiography* assembles a host of sources to argue that to properly understand the history of Christianity in Africa, we need to have the Holiness movement in all its forms squarely in focus, or we will misunderstand that history. This reading of African church history challenges historians who see African Christianity in a different light. Will any reader respond to Dr. Lang'at's article with a different interpretation?

Probably the least controversial article, *Biblical View of Results: Purpose Driven Mission*, is penned by Paul Mumo Kisau, Scott's own Vice-Chancellor. Using the paradigm of Paul's mission to Philippi, Professor Kisau develops indicators and criteria that allow him to construct a Biblical view of results that can be applied to the work of evangelism and missions. In his Philippian ministry, Paul the apostle frees a slave-girl from demonic oppression, sees God convert an upper-class businesswoman, and leads his jailor and his entire household to faith in Christ. Who wants to argue with good results?

*In Ghana Shall Be Saved*, Joseph Quayesi-Amakye uses two Ghanaian prayer-songs to argue that the Church must enter the public square to help apply salvation in Christ to the political, social and economic problems that Ghanaians encounter in their search for freedom and justice. He forces us to reflect on the question, "How broad is the theological concept of salvation?"

Obviously this editorial hopes to prod readers into submitting to AJET articles that display the same degree of passion as the writers in this issue. But AJET needs more Book Reviews. Why not start research on an AJET article by contributing a review of an African-oriented book on a topic you are passionate about?

## Contributors to AJET 29.1 2010

### Articles

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# The Prospects for Mother Tongue Theological Education in Western Kenya

by Jim Harries

## Abstract

*Beginning with a short background to the Luo people in Western Kenya, the author outlines how explorations into the nature of language in use (especially pragmatics), point to the importance of the use of MTs (Mother Tongues). While for many reasons the Luo people are in favour of the use of English-medium education, this is not as a means towards self-understanding, but of linking with lucrative international networks. Because the use of English in theological (and other) education does not result in workable relevant local comprehension, the church as well as society in general is oriented to 'mysterious' wealth generating processes. (That is, dependence on the West that is facilitated by appearing to follow Western directives and thinking through imitation of patterns of Western language use, in combination with orientation to prosperity through cleansing from malevolent spirits.) Three barriers identified to the use of MTs in education are government policy, the philosophy underlying the language (the fact that the Luo language is implicitly monistic in outlook and so not sensitive to the kinds of dualistic thinking that seem to lead to development), and its association with poverty and traditional taboos. Only through the use of MTs (or at least languages such as Kiswahili that are not dualistic or dominated by Europeans) in theological education can reality on the ground begin to be incorporated into discussion about the role of God and of the Church in society.*

## Introduction

This article evaluates an approach to promoting MT (Mother Tongue) education amongst a rural African people. The author sets the scene for his own 22 years of ministry in rural Africa by looking especially at the linguistic situation in Western Kenya. He goes on to identify barriers to the adoption of MTs. He advocates steps that can be taken by Westerners to promote MT education in Africa.

## 1. Setting the Scene

### 1.1 Personal Background

I am a single male in his forties. I have remained single so as to be able to live closely to the African people, more specifically the Luo people of Western Kenya. I have lived in Africa since 1988, having originated in the UK. For the last 17 years I have lived in one African village in Western Kenya. This has been the base from which I have gone out to engage in MT theological education. I am also rearing between 10 and 12 local children, mostly

orphans, in my home. My home language is *Dholuo* (and sometimes *Kiswahili*). Our extension Bible teaching programmes are interdenominational with a special emphasis on reaching indigenous churches. Travel between classes is by bicycle, on foot, or occasionally by bus. Our classes run for two hours and attendance is typically between one and seven people. I am also engaged in other church ministry including teaching and preaching in church meetings/gatherings, almost all of which is either in *Kiswahili* (trade language) or *Dholuo* (a true 'mother-tongue'). I teach two days weekly at a local American-run undergraduate theological seminary.

### 1.2 Luoland Background

The Luo of Western Kenya are related ethnically and linguistically to other groups in Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia and beyond. They are known as Nilotes as they are considered to have migrated along the Nile in ancient history. They began to enter Kenya about 500 years ago, and have since occupied land that had previously been populated by Bantu peoples. The occupation was by a combination of conquest, expulsion and assimilation.<sup>1</sup>

From having a reputation for intellectual excellence<sup>2</sup> and for imitating the White colonialists,<sup>3</sup> the Luo have recently become known developmentally and educationally as falling behind the rest of Kenya.<sup>4</sup> The capital city of the Luo region Kisumu is alongside Lake Victoria, and the third city in Kenya. The area the Luo occupy is around the Eastern end of the lake, mostly in relatively dry areas in which fishing and cattle-keeping are major economic activities. They are a strongly patrilineal people. Their 'traditions' have been recorded primarily by their own people, such as *Ker Paul Mboya*.<sup>5</sup> They number over three million in Kenya. A large number now live outside of their traditional homelands, especially in Nairobi, but many of them retain close links with the rural areas.

### 1.3 Vulnerable Mission Approach

YTC (Yala Theological Centre, 1994) and later STC (Siaya Theological Centre, 2004) were both founded within Luo areas by committees of local pastors. It became clear later that the pastors' interest centred in part on their hope that the presence of such teaching centres would draw in outside funds. I was in both cases the outsider/missionary who played a key role in prompting the setting up of the programmes. Very often local interest was short-lived

<sup>1</sup> Bethwell A. Ogot, *A History of the Luo Speaking Peoples of Eastern Africa*. Kisumu: Anyange Press, 2009, pp. 477-572.

<sup>2</sup> Lesa B. Morrison, 'The Nature of Decline: distinguishing myth from reality in the case of the Luo of Kenya.' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45/1, 2007, pp. 117-142, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> David William Cohen, and Odhiambo, E.S. Atieno, *Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape*. London: James Currey, 1989, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Morrison, 'The Nature of Decline', p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Mboya, *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi*. Kisumu: Anyange Press Ltd., 1983.

when outside moneys did not become available. Both centres continue to run at a basic level to date.

My initial time in Africa (Zambia, 1988 to 1991) gave me a basis of experience which governed my approach to Kenya in 1993. In essence in coming to Kenya I was determined to stay close to the people in my life and ministry. I also determined that to be lasting and relevant my ministry should be carried out using local languages and local resources. I therefore began learning *Kiswahili* in 1993 and then *Dholuo* in 1995. I am now fluent in both these languages. Having a Westerner come to work with them but not wanting to invest outside funds into his 'project' was too difficult a concept for some to cope with. I handed over some funds on a regular basis to Yala Theological Centre from a local American-run Bible college where I taught part-time, between the years 1996 and 2006. (The expectation is very high that Westerners coming to work in this part of the world will come with financial backup to generously support whatever project they engage in.)

Linguistic battles rage in this part of Kenya, as in many places in Africa and beyond. The contending languages are English (Kenya's official language), *Kiswahili* (Kenya's national language) and *Dholuo* (MT). In general oral use in Luoland *Dholuo* is by far the dominant language, followed by *Kiswahili* often mixed with *Dholuo*. For official purposes, almost all formal education and literacy, English is preferred.

#### 1.4 The Course of My Research

My early background having been in science (agriculture), I did not have a serious interest in languages until I began to learn the Kaonde language in Zambia in 1988. Through conviction regarding the importance of the use of local languages, I went on to learn *Dholuo* and *Kiswahili* in Kenya from 1993.

In the early days I imagined that once I had a grasp of these languages, teaching theology to the Luo people would be easy and they would flock to my classes. I realised subsequently that it was not going to be so straightforward; even though I may be able to speak in *Dholuo*, my reasoning being very Western could still easily make my teaching appear irrelevant to local contexts. 'Knowing' the language was only one step in the direction of 'being relevant' to the local context, I discovered.

As for many Westerners, it was difficult for me to comprehend and cope with the way of life and the ways of communication of many of my African colleagues. The reality of their lives frequently failed to meet the expectations that they gave through their use of English. Having realised that I must be misunderstanding something about the language I was hearing, I set out to explore linguistics in more detail from about 2001. Reading about pragmatics



helped me get my bearings.<sup>6</sup> I have since understood that language meaning cannot be derived from words alone without careful consideration of the contexts of their use; in every sense of the word 'context'.

With this realisation, I also had to recognize that even though two people (for example a Luo of Kenya and a British native) could be using the same language (English), they could be using it in very different ways. The intended and actual impacts of words they use are of necessity as different as the cultures and ways of life of the people concerned. It followed from this that 'forcing' Luo people to use English in the way it is used in the native-English speaking community (especially by Americans and Brits), as is happening increasingly in the globalised world, is forcing them onto unfamiliar territory. This is because patterns of word usage that 'fit' with Western contexts cannot be accurate in the guiding of many African/Luo contexts. This realisation has further confirmed my view that it is essential for the development of African communities that folk come to use their own language(s) in the education and governance of their own people.

The fortunes of YTC and STC have been profoundly influenced by the nature of the Luo community in which I live and work. I have found that power-relations are important in people's approach to these schools. Many African people prefer to work with organisations that are offering ladders 'up' the international career system. They less frequently consider the value of being helped by a foreigner to achieve better self-understanding. 'Formal' activities people engage in are sometimes those oriented to making money through a link with people outside of Africa, for the benefit of their own community. My own realisation that for a 'school' to be locally sustainable and to speak meaningfully into the local context it must operate using a local language, does not seem to be of much gravity to Luo people in my home community. I have observed that the lack of 'independence' that the use of English constantly implies, is less of a problem than the prospect of losing the lucrative links with the West that English seems to offer.

Presumably because the formal educational system in Kenya is in English, I have noted a number of times that even when 'schooling' is presented in *Dholuo*, students who write notes do so using English. Mother-tongue Luo speakers, even if they have minimum formal education, will very rarely write in *Dholuo*. *Dholuo*, while preferred for oral use, has a very small literature.

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the key texts that I read were Ruth. M. Kempson, *Semantic Theory. Cambridge Textbooks In Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977; Geoffrey H. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics*. London and New York: Longman, 1983; Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics: Cambridge text books in linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson, *Relevance: communication and cognition*. Second edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, and Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren, *Debating Diversity: analysing the discourse of tolerance*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Because these Luo speakers' English use tends to follow the pattern of the use of *Dholuo* in the local community, that would seem to some to present relatively little problem, (i.e. it is relatively easy to translate between such written English and spoken or written *Dholuo*.) On the other hand, the capacity of locally written materials to engage meaningfully with the local context must be limited in this process by the lack of vocabulary in English.

Many Luo people, even though they may have attended primary and secondary schools for many years (taught in English), are only partially literate in terms of their own very dominant social, cultural, religious etc. concerns. Much of the functioning of Luo society remains oral. This orientation to 'orality' has, ironically, been aided by new technology – such as the recent wide spread availability of mobile phones that have largely replaced hand-written letters, telegrams, etc.

There are very many good reasons why education should be carried out in MTs, including many that I have not even alluded to above. These are widely recorded in the literature.<sup>7</sup> In practice however there are also many barriers to such being implemented, which I discuss below.

## **2. Barriers to the Use of MTs in Education in Western Kenya**

Barriers to the effective use of MTs in theological education in rural Africa include the following:

### *2.1 Government Policy*

Kenyan government policy is to encourage the use of the official languages, English and Kiswahili. There is little or no formal encouragement for the use of MTs in education.

Recent post-election violence has heightened levels of in-country awareness of tribalism. Tribalism is considered by many people to be one of Kenya's most serious problems and one of the main enemies of progress for the nation. We recently heard that the international community was discouraging Kenya from asking for information on someone's 'tribe' in the national census. The authorities in Kenya however decided to keep the question, demonstrating the importance of tribal identity within Kenya.

'Tribe' and MT are closely related, tribal identities being linked to MT knowledge. Ogot argues that the Luo have in their history assimilated people of many different genetic/ethnic backgrounds. What now makes them Luo is

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<sup>7</sup> For example see Adams Bodomo, *On Language and Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana*. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 5/2, 1996, pp. 31-51, and Wayne P. Thomas and Virginia P. Collier, *A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement*. Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, 2002.

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/65j213pt#page-1> (accessed August 23, 2010).

that the MT of the assimilated people has become *Dholuo*. In order to be functional in Kenya, the Luo people, as other tribes, really need to know at least three languages: English, Kiswahili and their MT (in this case *Dholuo*).

Kenyan government policy is strikingly different from that of the European Union, even though the social contexts of both seem to have many similarities, including a bringing together of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds and origins into political and economic union. 'Ethnicity' in Europe is encouraged. Vast amounts of money are spent on encouraging the ongoing use of MTs. Political leadership is regularly and carefully spread between different ethnic groups. Political union is not forced onto people, but they are permitted to opt for or against such union. Kenya is very different. Ethnic groups are known as 'tribes'. Major formal efforts are made to try to conceal 'tribal' identities. No tribal language has official status, and instead of translating formal texts, one foreign language (English) is used for the purposes of all official business and almost all literacy. Kenyans are expected to struggle amongst themselves to make choices regarding the ethnicity of key political office bearers in the country.

As a result of all the above, MT education not only is not encouraged in Kenya, but can be seen to be a harbinger of division, violence, hatred, and even bloodshed.

## 2.2 Western Languages as an Implicit Asset

The view that to suppress MTs is part of the fight for national unity is not only found in Kenya. It is common in much of the continent of Africa. Very few African countries (exceptions perhaps being Ethiopia and Somalia) are governed through the use of MTs. European languages have been preferred for various reasons almost across the board.<sup>8</sup>

This history should not be passed over lightly. There are many reasons why European languages have acquired pre-eminence.<sup>9</sup> In a sense, it has been an inevitable outcome arising from the colonial era and the nature of the transition into independence that swept the continent. It seems that deeper questions regarding the capacity of African languages to govern 'modern' states are rarely considered.

When languages are understood (as I think they must be) as integrally linked to 'cultures', then I suggest that differences in culture result in inter-

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<sup>8</sup> Neville Alexander, *English Unassailable but Unattainable: the dilemma of language policy in South African education*. Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English at the University of Warwick, England, UK, July 7-10, 1999.

<http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED444151> (accessed August 28, 2008), pp. 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander, *English Unassailable but Unattainable*, p. 5.

linguistic incompatibility, i.e. untranslatability. Centuries of close contact and interchange between European nations has made translation between their languages relatively straightforward. The same can be said of neighbouring African languages, or even African languages as a whole (when referring to Africa,<sup>10</sup> I am focusing on sub-Saharan Africa). But it quite likely cannot be said about the interchange between African and European languages, which evolved in almost total separation for many centuries until very recent times.

Examples of apparent incompatibility are numerous. The word *witchcraft* is a classic case of being a very poor translation of many of the 'troubles' besetting the African continent. There is no translation for *nature* in the African languages I am aware of because the holistic African worldview does not separate 'nature' from the impact of 'the divine' as do European languages. No English word can translate *luor* between wife and husband in *Dholuo*, as social economic conditions in the native-English speaking world do not produce the fear that an African wife has of the shame and poverty she might face by walking out on her husband. No *Dholuo* word can translate *dance* in English, as 'dance' in Luoland is frequently oriented to forging links with spirits or gods, a concept that would seem preposterous for many native English speakers. I have argued elsewhere<sup>11</sup> that no *Dholuo* word can really helpfully translate *God*, because Luo understandings of the divine are much more pragmatic than 'intellectual' English ones. No English word can translate *dala* in *Dholuo*, because English people do not know what it is to live in a homestead that is ruled by one's departed forefathers. So examples could continue to be cited, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*.

Given the above, it is important to ask whether or not African MTs are capable of governing a modern state. Successful instances of such are hard to come by. A possible exception could seem to be Amharic in Ethiopia. Then we must also ask whether African languages can be used to successfully govern a modern school, bank, family, or even church?

If African languages cannot be used in the successful management of such institutions, then how can European languages be used by African people (who are still living within the 'African culture') to do so? The answer of course is that the adoption of a particular language does not in itself change the orientation of the heart, mind or intellect of a person. There is a sense then in which the use of a European language does not enable the running of a European institution. (Similarly, learning an African language would be an

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<sup>10</sup> "In recent times, most African scholars ... now see African religion as one in its essence" explains Laurenti Magesa in *African Religion: the moral traditions of abundant life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1997, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Jim Harries, 'The Name of God in Africa' and related contemporary theological, development and linguistic concerns.' *Exchange, Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*. 38/3, 2009, pp. 271-291.

insufficient means to equip a European to operate an institution in an African way.) What is a language after all, if not merely a way to express what is already in somebody's head?<sup>12</sup> But there are two (at least) important factors that need to be considered when evaluating the impact of the use of European languages in Africa. Firstly, European languages have habituated usages that are often put into writing and taught by visiting Europeans through books, radio etc. Repetition of such habitual uses of language can be fruitful.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, closely related to the above, is the fact that the use of European languages draws numerous rewards and subsidies from Western nations and multinational organisations - subsidies for books, free attendance at conferences, places at Western universities, enjoyment of international television, etc. In addition (ironically) the use by African states of European languages helps to blind the West to corrupt practices going on in these states. At least one reason for this is that Africans these days are typically the spokespeople representing their countries to Western nations, and they will often use English in such a way as to conceal certain practices on the continent. Such concealment would be more difficult if the dominant mode of international communication was Europeans learning African languages. The use of Western languages in Africa is in other words, amongst other things incredibly generative of unhealthy *dependency*.

One flip side of the way that the use of Western languages creates dependency is that doing away with the use of Western languages in Africa would threaten the benefits that come with dependency. In an age in which massive flows of aid and other subsidies of all kinds to Africa are lubricated by the use of European languages on the continent, a lot of powerful people stand to lose a great deal if MT use were to become widespread. The economic equation is so heavily in favour of European languages for the powerful elite that it is hard to expect them to change their positions.

My concern in this article is particularly with theology and the church. Outsiders to Africa often wonder how they can contextualise their teachings so as to make them relevant to the church in Africa. In my experience (heavily supported by Maranz<sup>14</sup>) some Africans can be more concerned about how they can continue to make money out of their foreign friends.

### *2.3 Association with Poverty While Taboos Remain Intact*

Whether this is due to the misleading teaching of false hegemonies, or whether it be socio-economic reality, it has been my experience that many

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<sup>12</sup> I draw here on Sperber and Wilson's 'relevance theory'.

<sup>13</sup> In so far as they will encourage the Europeans concerned to believe that something familiar to them is being practiced, which can in turn encourage them to be generous in their support of the activity concerned.

<sup>14</sup> David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: observations from Africa*. Dallas: SIL International, 2001, pp. 9, 54, 65 etc.

people in Western Kenya do not see a place for their MT in formal or written contexts. Popular wisdom says that European languages are good for writing and education, Kiswahili can be used for intra-African oral exchanges, whereas MTs are really of primary value only in the home and in intra-tribal oral communication.

I have suggested elsewhere that this is due, in part at least, to what I have referred to as a 'magical worldview'.<sup>15</sup> This is similar to the 'holistic view' that I have already referred to above. It can be very difficult for Europeans, who have over many centuries developed a mechanistic understanding of their context and history, to grasp that for other people one's fate and fortune are determined by pleasing gods (ancestors, spirits etc.). "Nothing is more foreign to the pre-capitalist economy than representation of the future ... as a field of possibles to be explored and mastered by calculation" says Birth.<sup>16</sup> For these reasons amongst others, the nature of many Luo people's meeting with Western civilisation and all that it seems to offer has taught them that the best way to access what is available is through learning and making as much use as possible of Western languages. The thought that attention to their own languages may enable them also to achieve what the 'West' has achieved, is way off the radar screen of many African people.

The evidence for the position outlined in the above paragraph seems overwhelming from within many Kenyan milieus: Those people who are confined to MTs remain stuck to the requirement to fulfil numerous taboos, complex practices to please ancestors, strictures of lifestyle, diet, housing, permitted agricultural management systems and so on and so forth. Their colleagues who master European languages can end up earning high salaries, driving cars, travelling internationally, and having an apparent immunity to the curses and taboos of 'village culture'. Telling someone that the 'way up' in life for them can be found in their MT can have you laughed out of town. The MT remains for those who have not been able to 'afford' to acquire more prestigious languages. Plus of course for use pertaining to essential 'maintenance' matters regarding home, family, relationships etc. 'Progress', however, is seen as very much tied in with non-MTs.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time as being faced with the above, linguists (and I am one of them) proclaim the advantages of MT use. I believe that the linguists are right.

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<sup>15</sup> Jim Harries, 'The Magical Worldview in the African Church: What Is Going On?' *Missiology: An International Review*. 28/4, 2000, pp. 487-502.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin Birth, 'The Creation of Coevalness and the Danger of Homochronism.' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 14, 2008, pp. 3-20, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> See also Adeyemi Adegoju, 'Empowering African Languages: rethinking the strategies.' *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, March 2008, pp. 14-32. <http://www.jpnafrican.com/docs/vol2no3/EmpoweringAfricanLanguages.pdf> (accessed April 30, 2010), p. 21.

The current advantages gained by Luo and perhaps African people more generally through use (or 'abuse') of European languages is a not a mirage; it is very real. But, it is misleading and in the long run threatens widespread destruction on the back of increasing unhealthy dependence on the charitable whims of others. A constant heavy drawing on foreign languages for key national and local functions is preventing indigenous languages, including MTs, from developing. But the very foreign languages being used have such a poor fit to people's own life-orientation that the advantage in their use is enormously tilted towards outside subsidy. Increasing levels of globalisation are making it more and more difficult (if not impossible) for African communities to bend and adjust Western languages for their own purposes. Instead, their orientation to pleasing the West so as to continue to receive subsidies and grants pushes them more and more towards incompetence in the handling of their own affairs.

This misleading directing of whole peoples down a dead-end one-way road cannot, I don't think, be blamed on the Luo or African people themselves. They have found themselves to be victims of economic pressures and initiatives coming to them from outside of their boundaries. The state of foreign-dependence of African communities for sheer survival is increasingly reinforced by the 'global community'. So called 'independence' as may be found in Anglophone Africa, seems to be increasingly sought through wholesale transfer from the West. In educational terms, this means that the wholesale transportation of curricula designed in the West for Western people and contexts are preferred to contextualisation to local conditions. The basis of evaluation is very rarely 'fit to local conditions', and almost universally focused on 'compatibility with the international system'. Such refusal to engage with context, or to engage one's own critical faculties because of a preference for accepting foreign wisdom lock-stock-and-barrel, I consider to be extremely dangerous for the long-term prosperity of the African continent.

#### *2.4 Language Choice in Theological Education*

Experience of working within Luo-land in Western Kenya quickly reveals the basic unpopularity of MTs in theological education, as also in other fields. In a fundamental way in people's minds formal education has become associated with English and the learning of what is foreign. There is an apparent preference for the formal to be in a separate category to the indigenous on the part of both those who want to maintain the indigenous and those who want to undermine it. Those who want to maintain tradition seek to protect it from outside attacks such as that of rationalism. Those who want to undermine the indigenous do so in foreign terms and using foreign categories

as a means to avoid the strictures and means by which indigenous cultures otherwise maintain themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Many people's understanding of a 'bright future' is that it will best be achieved through the imitation of what is foreign. Because this does not mix well with local categories, it is best taken in as pure a form as possible. Formal theological education is taken as falling into this category.

I think that there is little doubt, if any at all, that communication in a language is aided by the use of that language in education. From personal experience it seems to be evident. It is extremely difficult for school-children to apply in depth what they have learned using English in the classroom to their daily life that is dominated by an African mother-tongue such as Dholuo.

When such communication is attempted, uncomfortable clashes can easily be revealed. For example, English language study of agriculture can reveal the desirability of early planting of maize, whereas Luo custom requires that maize be planted in order of people's seniority; constraining a younger sibling to delay planting until older relatives have done so, out of respect for them. While such can be countered theologically through reference to the ways in which Old Testament laws have been superseded by Christ's teaching, such theology has barely taken hold within indigenous circles of language use. While such challenges to traditional customs are happening, it is much easier to climb the ladder of achievement to recognised qualifications in theological education by ignoring such traditions than by trying to articulate or engage with them.

I am not aware of any trial carried out to measure 'pastoral effectiveness' amongst church leaders by comparing English with mother-tongue use in theological education. As mentioned above, it would seem to be self-evident that MT use is more effective. Except that is, where people's expectations in churches are already oriented to the fruits of English language education. Amongst these fruits are material rewards often available to churches whose leader is fluent in English and able to convince Western donors to part with funds. If potential donors are Christian, or even in some cases when they are not, it is familiarity with Western theological debates and ability to engage in them that is more likely to impress donors than is confusing (to the donors) explanations of indigenous concerns.

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<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein Hurteau explains that the world of orality cannot be refuted, one must simply "walk away from it" (Robert Hurteau, 'Navigating the Limitations of Western Approaches to the Intercultural Encounter: the works of Walter Ong and Henry Triandis.' *Missiology: an international review*. 34/2, 2006, pp. 201-218, p. 206). So it seems many people in Western Kenya perceive that they cannot defeat the worldview of MT languages from the inside, but one must 'walk away' from it by moving into other languages.



In many parts of Africa, and certainly Kenya is a case in point, the church seems to have 'moved on' from MTs in recent years. In a sense that is to say, that it has moved on from understanding-based-belief, to power-based or spirit-based faith. Evidence for this in Luoland is widespread, including the frequent use of the term 'miracle' in the names of churches. Unless miracles (or money) are on offer, one is unlikely to attract people to a crusade or other meeting, I have frequently been advised. This seems to be a revival in belief in magic.<sup>19</sup>

The economic equation in Luoland and presumably also other parts of the African continent is such that European languages continue to flourish while MTs face relative stagnation. Unfortunately their being rooted in unfamiliar contexts means that European languages cannot be understood at depth by most residents of Luoland. Because as a result people are required to engage in processes that they do not understand and that have little fit with local ways of life, this contributes to corruption. Often the use of European languages is effective because it is a way of drawing foreign subsidy; Westerners visiting Africa are much more likely to be impressed by and to subsidize something occurring in English than were it to be happening in some other (to them) indecipherable tongue. That Western subsidy is the 'actual' source of some African miracles.

There would seem to be no doubt at all that MT theological education is the best way to deepen cognitive skills, but much of the church in Luoland (and presumably beyond) is more interested in power and material prosperity than it is in the acquisition of such skills.

### 3. Advice for the Future

The debate on MT use in Luoland and Kenya is helpfully seen as a part of the wider discussion on dependency on the continent. The current level of outside-dependency results in a preference for non-MT languages. This choice is not made on the basis of maximising the acquisition of cognitive ability.

### Conclusion

The use of MTs in education including theological education is in this article found to be essential for the future of the prosperity of the African continent. Much of Western policy in respect to Africa, both during and since colonial times, has unfortunately undermined MT usage. The local person in Western Kenya sees the balance tilted well in favour of a preference for English over MTs for very good reasons linked to the economic dependence of Africa on the West. Theological education in MTs could provide the 'depth' of

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<sup>19</sup> The way I here use the term 'magic' is outlined in more detail in another article. Harries, 'The Magical Worldview', *Missiology* 28/4, 2000.

understanding needed to counter such orientation to dependency. This requires interest by Westerners in MTs and a countering of the current false hegemony.

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# **Mother Tongue Theological Education in Africa: A Response to Jim Harries' *The Prospects for Mother Tongue Theological Education in Western Kenya***

by Andrew Wildsmith

## **Introduction**

Once Jim Harries' article focused my attention on the need for Mother Tongue Theological Education (MTTE) in Africa, I was astonished that it had taken me so long to see its importance. The last time I felt that way was at Moffat Bible College when Phillip Morrison introduced an idea for a new course, The Multi-Church Pastor.<sup>1</sup> He stated the obvious point that many of our students will pastor more than one church, but the other half of the equation, that *all our courses assume the Western model of each church having at least one pastor*, was an ice cold bath. African multi-church pastors need to minister to three, four, ten or more local congregations as effectively as possible rather than just cope with that difficult situation as best they can.

Similarly Harries points out the obvious fact that many students in our Bible colleges and seminaries studying in English or another globalizing language will often, if not always, be ministering in an African language. But the other half of the equation is that *their English-based education does not always adequately prepare them to minister in African languages*. For me, the other shoe dropped at that point and I saw how true that was at times. I have tried to state the last situation as charitably as possible, but I agree with Harries that a good MTTE is usually much better than an English-only education.<sup>2</sup> The lack of MTTE isn't the only reason for pastoral ineffectiveness when it occurs, but I believe it is an important factor. I also believe that the level of spiritual maturity of ordinary church members in Africa would be increased if their leaders were trained to minister more effectively in MTs as well as in national languages like Kiswahili and global languages like English.<sup>3</sup>

The Church and mission agencies devote lots of personnel, time, energy and money towards translating the Bible into MTs, with the eventual goal of translating the Bible into every tongue and language. If we believe so passionately in the need for all Christians to have the Bible in their own language, then why would we not emphasize the application of that MT Bible in pastoral education just as strongly? I don't have a good answer, do you?

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see [www.multichurchpastor.org](http://www.multichurchpastor.org) for The Multi-Church Pastor Institute, which is part of Africa International University's Institute for the Study of African Realities (ISAR) in Karen, Kenya.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Jim Harries, his work and other resources see [www.jim-mission.org.uk](http://www.jim-mission.org.uk) and [www.vulnerablemission.org](http://www.vulnerablemission.org).

<sup>3</sup> When I mention English alone in this essay, I also mean other globalizing languages.

### MTTE: Adding Another Tool to the Educational Toolbox

Andrew Walls reminds us that theological education in English and other globalizing languages enables African church leaders to contribute to and benefit from the world-wide Church.<sup>4</sup> The fact that African churches and foreign mission organizations have invested heavily in pastoral training institutions that function in English means that language will continue to dominate theological education in Africa for many years. Among other things, English theological education equips African Christianity to influence Christianity elsewhere. Several other benefits of using English could be easily cited, including the fact that it is often the only language that all the students and all the lecturers have in common. It is not the use of English that is my prime concern - it is that English often completely replaces MTs in pastoral and theological education<sup>5</sup> in many institutions. Harries' article explains why, beginning from his viewpoint and experience in Western Kenya.

If MTs are essential to continuing and enhancing Christian maturity in Africa, and if Harries is correct and the emphasis on English in pastoral education is connected with dependence on financial aid from outside Africa and connected with the rejection of MTs as a medium for material and educational progress, then the value of MTs as educational mediums has to be re-established regardless of their potential to attract or repel foreign investment. And the benefits that would arise from MT education are not limited to the religious realm. As Harries notes, the "use of MTs in education including theological education is in this article found to be essential for the future of the prosperity of the African continent".<sup>6</sup> Ministry in MTs should be another important tool in the toolbox that graduates learn to use during a good Bible college education in Africa.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal conversation at Prof. Walls' special lecture, *The Cultural History of Conversion*, Thursday, 26th January 2012 at the Centre for World Christianity, Africa International University.

<sup>5</sup> "Theological education" could be better described as "pastoral training" in educational institutions that aim to prepare people for pastoral ministry in local churches - if the curriculum is designed to train pastors for dealing with African pastoral issues and African settings instead of importing Western curricula. Rather than discuss that aspect, I merely want to point it out that in this essay I use the terms "theological education" and "pastoral training" or "pastoral education" as synonyms.

<sup>6</sup> See page 13 of this issue of AJET. In addition to Harries, a theological rationale for using African languages, and the importance of African languages in the development of African Christianity, both in theology and practice, are discussed by Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995, pp. 109-125; Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989; Andrew F. Walls, "The Translation Principle in Christian History" in his *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996, pp. 26-42.

### **Missionaries and MTTE: An Ideal Component of a Larger Solution**

Harries highlights the role of missionaries in this quest for the revival of MTs in education, including theological education. Any missionary who has managed to learn enough of a local MT to greet people at church will testify to the instant smiles (and sometimes laughter) that accompany his attempts. A theological lecturer who understands the local MT, the local world-view and the culture based on it, as well as having the Biblical and theological expertise to contextualize Christianity, will be more effective than one who does not.<sup>7</sup>

In the past I have made organized, but relatively brief, attempts to learn Ibibio (south-eastern Nigeria), Kikuyu (or Gikuyu) and Kiswahili (Kenya), but without gaining much ground, never mind fluency. I have not been alone. It has been my experience in Nigeria and Kenya over many years that missionaries in theological/pastoral education who teach in English rarely have time to learn a MT to the point of fluency, even if they have a gift for languages and the desire and determination to achieve fluency in the first place. Most missionaries I know who have achieved fluency in an African language had an extended time for language study, something that is much more likely if their first ministry was not in theological education. As in my own case, it is usually the college that hands the newly arrived missionary a heavy course load, and some administration, and then adds as an afterthought, "Ah, yes, we're assigning you to a local church so you can get a sense of the culture and learn something of the language." Even when the church, college and mission do create time and give support for the missionary to learn the local MT or Swahili or Hausa unencumbered by college duties, he/she will sooner or later get his heavy load of courses and administration and progress in the language may stop or even reverse. For a missionary lecturer to become fluent in a MT he almost always needs to live in a village for as long as it takes to achieve his goal before doing anything at the college, and then make a deliberate effort to keep his hard-earned fluency alive. In other words, he has to make some of the same sacrifices that Jim Harries has made if he desires to become and stay fluent in an African language. Only an exceptionally gifted and determined person can achieve fluency any other way, especially if he has a family.

Moreover, it is now much harder to recruit career missionary lecturers, and how many new recruits understand the need to learn a MT, never mind have the desire to do so? The need in many mission-founded African churches for more missionary Bible College teachers, especially in schools where the MT would be most useful, far outstrips the ability of missions to recruit them. Insisting on MT acquisition before ministry starts will very likely further reduce

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<sup>7</sup> For a fuller discussion of the value of MT acquisition by missionaries and what inhibits it, see Allison Howell, *A Daily Guide for Language and Culture Learning*, revised edition, Bukuru, Nigeria: Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute and Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS), 2002, pp. 7-17.

the number of candidates a mission can successfully recruit for African Bible colleges. Meanwhile the schools are screaming for more lecturers just to ensure their survival at a time when many of them are also seeking to upgrade to university status without enough money and personnel to easily do so. A missionary lecturer, especially one with a qualified spouse, means less money spent on salaries, and colleges tend to depend on the budget space created when the missions pay the missionaries' salaries. It is ideal, though difficult, for missionaries in pastoral training schools to model a commitment to MT pastoral education. Therefore I believe that the remedy to the illness requires an additional medicine - a made-in-Africa prescription.

### **Rich Missionaries in an Age of Dependence**

Before suggesting possible roles for African theological lecturers in MMTE, it may be useful to comment on Harries' experience as a missionary fighting a lonely personal battle against the pressure to aid and abet a Bible college's financial dependence on outsiders. As Maranz notes, relationships in Africa have a financial component.<sup>8</sup> This makes Harries' stand against dependence a very difficult position to be in, just as he describes in his article. Most missionaries have always been relatively rich compared to most Africans they minister to, and the tradition of missionaries sharing their wealth is as long as the history of the missionary movement. But from personal experience it is extremely difficult to know how to behave properly as a rich Christian in a setting where the problems are always deeper than any missionary's pockets. And it is very difficult to share without inadvertently causing dependence or occasionally being taken advantage of. There are social norms that govern the financial aspects of a relationship in Africa, but most missionaries don't know them and Africans don't always recognize the extent of the missionaries' ignorance. This often causes grave problems and misunderstandings. As Harries has testified, the tradition of missionary generosity can trigger African expectations of missionary financial aid as a matter of course. If these expectations become the governing motive for desiring missionary involvement, then the African social norm of mutual support in a relationship is easily open to abuse. And this happens from time to time, though I have never experienced the sort of institutional pressure Harries testifies to. Hopefully such pressure is rare. Discouraging financial dependence while fulfilling the Biblical mandate to help fellow believers is neither easy nor susceptible to a formulaic solution. I believe striving for some kind of balance is essential, but Harries sees the situation differently. He believes the missionary should provide no foreign funds at all because these inhibit indigenous ministry and create dependence.<sup>9</sup> Neither path is easy to travel.

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<sup>8</sup> David E. Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa*, Dallas: SIL International, International Museum of Cultures, Publications in Ethnography, Publication 37, 2001. I refer to the Oasis International edition, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>9</sup> See also Jim Harries, "Deliverance Ministry in an African Perspective", on his website.

**MTTE: A Made-in-Africa Prescription Illustrated****1. The New Principal**

Imagine the newly appointed African principal of a Bible college anywhere in English-speaking Africa. He wants to improve the college and see it progress, and he wants to leave his mark on the institution. But one aspect of his vision seems somewhat odd to most members of the governing board and to the mission-founded church that owns the college. He sees the future of the college as moving in two directions, expanding outwards from offering its traditional B.Th. into selected master's level courses in Biblical studies, theology, Christian education, missions, and counselling and chaplaincy and also expanding into diploma and certificate level courses. In addition, he must initiate a curriculum review of the existing B.Th. programme. None of these ideas cause anyone any discomfort because the curriculum review is long overdue, and the denomination consists of both urban and rural churches, the former desiring reliable and capable master's level pastors and the latter still struggling to find trained pastors who will minister to more than one church.

What his church leaders find hard to understand is that the new principal, a former rural pastor himself and educated in Africa and overseas, seems bent on emphasizing the role of African languages as well as English in the new courses and in the revised B.Th. curriculum. Four things convince the governing board and the denomination to give him a chance to implement his vision. First, while he was overseas earning his PhD in theology he forged strong ties among the churches affiliated with the mission that had brought the Gospel. Indeed the mission broke with its long tradition of not accepting Africans as missionaries so it pays his salary. In short, he is an affordable principal. Second, the college governing board and the church leaders know and trust him because he has served faithfully in every local church where he pastored, and has proved himself to be an able administrator within the church hierarchy. Third, in a joint meeting of the college's governing board and the denomination's executive committee he arouses their pride as Africans and as Christians, starting with his ability to greet each person by name and in that person's own mother tongue. He then extols the virtues of African mother tongues and the national trade language as mediums for teaching theology, as well as the utility of English as a global educational language. His impassioned oration reminds them of their African roots as well as their place in the world-wide church. Fourth, there is no one else of the right age, social status and proven godliness who is as capable of doing the job. They are prepared to give him a chance despite his odd ambition to include African languages in the education of future church leaders.

At the first college faculty meeting, he surprises all the faculty members by greeting each of them by name and in their own language. He wears the authority of his new position like a well-tailored jacket, naturally and without a hint of arrogance or pretence. The new principal starts the meeting with a



short devotional and opening prayer. His audience finds these to be both relevant and encouraging. As they turn to the day's agenda, the new principal listens carefully and says very little as his vice-principal and the academic dean competently walk through the usual preparations for the start of the new academic year. The vice-principal reminds everyone that the governing board and the church leaders have approved the need for a B.Th. curriculum review and for the addition of masters and lower level courses. Then he turns the meeting over to the principal who assures the faculty that their voices will be heard and that their advice and ideas are welcome. He then invites everyone to his house for the pre-term faculty dinner.

After the dinner when everyone is comfortably settled in his sitting room, the principal hands out one page of questions for the faculty members to respond to if they wish.

## **2. The Principal's Paper**

1. If translating the Bible into African languages is important enough for NEGST at AIU in Kenya to create a PhD in Bible Translation, then how important are African languages for preaching and teaching in local churches where members use a MT as their primary or only language?

2. How well can our students handle English in their studies, in preaching, in assignments, tests and exams, field research papers and in writing library research papers? Is there room for improvement? Is there a desire among those who apply for admission to get help in improving their English? Is the curriculum so crowded with courses that students find it hard to cope with the workload in English - which is their third or fourth language for many of them?

3. How well can our graduates apply what they learn in English to the lives of their church members who don't speak English? How well can our graduates minister in their mother tongue in churches where they must do so? Is there any benefit to including in our new curriculum a course on how to apply key Biblical and theological truths in African Mother Tongues?

4. What do your answers to the following questions reveal about your attitude towards African languages? Do the questions make you angry?

Do African languages lack the ability to adequately translate the original Bible written in Hebrew and Greek?

Do African languages lack the ability to adequately communicate the Gospel in today's cultures?

Do African languages lack the ability to adequately do theology and Biblical study at advanced levels?

Do African languages lack the ability to adequately prepare people for ministry in the church and its mission?

Do African languages lack the ability to adequately train Africans for work and participation in today's world?

5. Is there any wisdom in including Mother Tongue Theological Education (MTTE) as well as English in training students in this college? What might MTTE look like? What might be the benefits of MTTE and what problems might arise if we tried to introduce it?

6. How would our missionary lecturers respond if the college offered to reduce their workload enough to enable them to become fluent in the national trade language or the local Mother Tongue, if they had a desire to do so? Would they be interested in such an offer?

The faculty respond to the principal's paper by asking him to clarify some of the questions. Then they give their own opinions and ideas. Finally someone asks the new principal why he presented this paper to the faculty.

"Ah, thank you, I was waiting for someone ask that question." He then shares his vision for the college with great skill and eloquence. When he finishes, even those who are sceptical about aspects of the vision feel how deeply the principal cares about the spiritual welfare of the people in the pews of the church their college serves. Their new principal obviously cares about the students and about the faculty and their opinions. Like the governing board and the church, they are willing to give him a chance.

### **Suggestions for Implementing MTTE in African Bible Colleges**

This fictional story suggests some principles and activities that could guide the practical and gradual implementation of MTTE in Africa's Bible colleges, seminaries and Christian universities. These are intended to stimulate thinking on this topic, so they make no claim to be the Ten Commandments of MMTE.

1. The character, reputation and leadership skills of Africans and missionaries promoting MTTE must draw stakeholders into understanding and sharing in the vision for MTTE. While these personal characteristics and skills are always part of the recipe for successful leadership, they are especially required for introducing such radical concepts as MTTE. The more African college or church leaders are like Jesus, the more the godly authorities they report to will trust them with new and radical directions.

2. Promoters of MMTE must try to help the Church and theological institutions regain appropriate pride in African languages. African leaders might do this by using African languages well and by encouraging others to use them well. But individuals must be *willing* to learn a new African language or use a MT in theological education because these cannot be forced. Stories abound of educational authorities forbidding the use of MTs on campus in favour of English, especially in days gone by. But if both English and MTs are useful in different settings and purposes, then colleges need an atmosphere that respects and encourages both. Advocates cannot expect 100% faculty and church acceptance of the vision for MMTE, but must not be discouraged by

this. The process of creating acceptance for MMTE may be long and difficult because English is such a dominant factor in African pastoral training today.

3. African Bible colleges already teaching in MTs should integrate MMTE into the new curriculum if they decide to “upgrade” the college by adding “higher levels” of credentials and by beginning to teach in a globalizing language.

4. Recognize and express the value and contribution of globalizing languages to pastoral training in Africa, but also recognize and express the value of African languages, whether MTs or trade languages like Kiswahili. This is simply a question of attitude. If many Africans regard MTs as “bush” or unfit for educational purposes as Harries finds they do, then like Harries, we must work hard to change that attitude through inspiration and example. If missionaries from outside Africa learn an African language, it will delight and encourage many Africans. This is one reason behind Harries’ plea for missionaries to learn MTs. This suggestion overlaps with the two previous ones.

5. As much as possible, African college and university principals could support missionary lecturers who volunteer to learn African languages. This probably would entail reducing the lecturers’ load and ensuring they have a plan and skilled language tutors to help them towards MT fluency and cultural literacy.

6. MT speakers can contribute to the development of African languages by inventing the necessary words to express Biblical and theological terms in MTs. English became a globalizing language after centuries of borrowing and inventing new terms and expressions. Its vocabulary and structure changed over time as needed, and continues to develop today. All languages can develop a larger capacity to communicate new things, even be re-born, as the state of Israel resurrected and adapted Biblical Hebrew to the modern world. If we believe that God’s word can be translated into any language, then there is no reason to denounce African languages as being incapable of discussing and teaching the Bible and theology (or anything else). It will take time, planning, commitment, effort and creativity to continue the development of African languages, but it can be done, and it should be done.

7. One of the ways to contribute to the development of African languages is to make use of modern communications technology. Mobile phones and the Internet have changed and are changing communication opportunities for Africa.<sup>10</sup> African advocates for MTTE can harness these tools in new and imaginative ways. In addition academic journals in Africa, such as AJET, could make it a policy to publish articles in African languages from time to time, though AJET will remain an English language journal for the foreseeable future. Other MT journals can be created and posted on the Internet as free,

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<sup>10</sup> See this BBC article for how communications technology is being used to help preserve MTs in danger of dying out. Accessed 2012.02.18 at 8:28 PM.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-17081573?print=true>

downloadable, on-line resources without publishing a hard copy at all. In the beginning, these MT journals may remain a labour of love, rather than a source of income, but as ministry tools, they can help promote and develop MTTE and MTs in general.

8. Launch a pilot project, perhaps an elective course on transposing theology learned in English into a series of sermons or Bible studies in a church that uses the local mother tongue. This could be done as part of a structured and supervised field education assignment. Don't be afraid to start small. One small step taken towards the goal of MTTE is better than a large step that no one dares to take. Good evaluation and good results from a pilot project will allow you to make adjustments and give you a foundation for taking the next step. The next step could be an elective course, and later on a required course, in the theory and practice of ministering in MTs in African churches. Other courses could be added. Possible course titles might be something like: *Preaching in Mother Tongues* or *Preaching Narrative Sermons in Kikuyu* or *Principles and Problems of Mother Tongue Bible Interpretation* or *Christian Counselling in African Languages*. These sorts of courses should have a field education component so students can experience the theory being put into practice. Colleges and universities implementing MMTE will need to hire lecturers able and willing to meet the needs of the various MTs spoken by the students enrolled in programmes that include a MTTE component.

9. Do everything possible to ensure that the college library has copies of the Africa Bible Commentary (ABC) in Kiswahili or Hausa (when the latter is published) as well as in the most useful globalizing languages in your area. For example, in Kenya the ABC is available in English and Kiswahili. Other useful resources are also available in African languages, such as Phillip Morrison's *The Multi-Church Pastor* in Kiswahili. Check the Internet for other resources. Write your own MT textbooks and resources, and seek college or church help in publishing them for students to use in college and when they graduate, even in small quantities with do-it-yourself comb bindings.

10. Train Bible college students and local church elders and other leaders to read their MT Bibles aloud with passion and clarity in church services so the audience can more easily grasp the meaning of the passage. Although the oral interpretation of the Bible in MTs is a topic worthy of a separate study, this is a fairly simple project that can demonstrate the value of MTs in the Church and instill pride in the MT used. Where the MT Bible translation no longer reflects everyday MT speech, as in the case of the original Kikuyu Bible (which has been written in what some call 'King James Kikuyu'), then a new version is required, a *Revised Kikuyu Version*, for example. Bible translation and re-translation is usually an academic specialty beyond the resources of a single Bible College, but MT theological lecturers could be resource persons for a revised translation project initiated by the national Bible Society or other organizations doing Bible translation as their primary ministry.

## Conclusion

English and other globalising languages are, and will remain, primary teaching languages in many African pastoral training institutions, but certainly God values Mother Tongues and has no reservations in using them for His purposes. I am not the first to notice Acts 2:1-11 in this regard.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because **each one heard them speaking in his own language**. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then **how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs - **we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!**’ ”

I have been blessed from talking with experienced and mature African pastors and students, gleaning from them many cultural insights. But my inadequacies, especially my failure to learn even one African language properly, seem overwhelming sometimes. If the missionary impact on African theological education is inevitably limited, John’s eschatological vision of Revelation 7:9-10 will inevitably be fulfilled:

“Baada ya haya nikatazama na hapo mbele yangu palikuwa na umati mkubwa wa watu ambao hakuna ye yote awezaye kuuhesabu. Kutoka kila taifa, kila kabila, kila jamaa na kila lugha, wamesimama mbele ya kile kiti cha enzi na mbele ya Mwana-Kondoo. Walikuwa wamevaa mavazi meupe na wakiwa wameshika matawi ya mitende mikononi mwao. Nao walikuwa wakipiga kelele kwa sauti kubwa wakisema: ‘Wokovu una Mungu wetu, Yeye aketiye kwenye kiti cha enzi na Mwana-Kondoo!’ ”

“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ ”

Redeemed humanity’s eternal destiny is praising God together, perhaps in everyone’s Mother Tongue. What if Babel’s curse is removed when we sing God’s praises in a multitude of MTs that *together* form the heavenly language? What if heaven’s language is incomplete without the full range of MTs decreed by God? It is only speculation, but perhaps MTs are more valuable and enduring than we can possibly know this side of eternity.

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# Holiness Historiography As a Theological Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Christianity in Africa

by Robert K. Lang'at

## Abstract

*There is a scandal in African Christian historiography that has faded from the eyes of church historians and theologians in regard to the pietistic/holiness reading of African Christianity, which itself provides the most comprehensive framework for understanding mainline-evangelical-pentecostal-charismatic Christianities. This article argues that the doctrine and experience of holiness is central to understanding the process that has brought African Christianity to where it is today. This research sketches the twin challenges that face a study of the doctrine of holiness as a theological framework for understanding the emergence of Christianity in Africa: (1) those that are historiographical; and (2) those that are essentially historical. It also provides a clear demonstration of the tenacity of a holiness/revivalist reading of African Protestant Christianity.*

## Introduction

It is now a truism that “the center of gravity of Christianity” has shifted from the northern to the southern hemisphere with Africa playing a vital role in that transition. Andrew F. Walls in the 1970s was one of the first chroniclers to articulate this shift in the history of Christianity and to bring it to bear on church history texts. Walls underscored that this change implied that theology in the third-world was “worth caring about.” In his most recent re-articulation, Walls has once again pointed out that “we have to regard African Christianity as potentially the representative Christianity of the twenty-first century.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A.F. Walls, “Towards an Understanding of Africa’s Place in Christian History,” in *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, ed. J.S. Pobee (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 180-182. Walls’ later shows that he considers African Christianity axiomatic for understanding the nature of global Christianity in the twenty-first century. See “Africa in Christian History: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 85. Succeeding scholars have built their arguments on the significance of third-world Christianity in general, and Africa in particular, on Walls’ thesis. These include William A. Dyrness, *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 13, who claims that the third-world church overshadows that of the west. Philip Jenkins’ provocative book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 3, discusses Christianity “going south,” while A.H. Anderson’s *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2001), 7, extends the same thesis to claim that ferment in the AICs, as “a major force in African Christianity today,” is “one manifestation of shifting of the center of gravity of Christianity in the twentieth century from the North to the South.”



But how are we to understand the historical and theological development of Christianity in Africa? If we were to choose one theological theme whose inner dynamics would help unravel the outward manifestations of Christianity in Africa in all its successes and failures, which doctrine, if any, would provide a better, integrated, interpretive framework for this “new Christendom?” This paper seeks to employ the often academically dismissed doctrine of holiness as an integrated, interpretive framework. But this essay bears in mind that there has been no absolute theological uniformity in the expression of holiness throughout the African continent and that the doctrine of holiness is not the only overarching framework that would serve interpretive purposes.

### **1. The Definition and Origin of the Term “Holiness”**

The term holiness, or the experience of sanctification, is a religious term that is understood in a variety of ways by different religious movements. The term as used in this research is defined as a Christian spiritual experience related to, but distinct from, and subsequent to, “justification” as understood by a number of renewal movements in early church history such as monastic movements in antiquity, religious orders of the medieval period, the pietistic revivals of the eighteenth century and, most clearly for the modern period, by John Wesley in his twofold conception of soteriology.<sup>2</sup> The term “holiness” is elusive because it refers to a religious experience that the Bible and theologians conceptualize in a variety of ways. It has been referred to as the second work of grace, the second blessing, baptism with the Holy Spirit, full salvation, walking with God, Christian perfection, crucifixion of the flesh, purity of heart, cleansing, consecration and other synonyms. It takes a nuanced investigation to trace a particular thread of holiness interpretation through various writings and individual proponents. This doctrine has influenced and spawned other movements beyond Methodism, particularly in Africa. Though polemics tend to project theological distance from original Methodist understanding, the overall structure of the doctrine and the concretization of this reality in various contexts take similar patterns of manifestations. The doctrine has been perpetuated historically by groups of evangelical revivalists that see themselves as part of “the Holiness Movement.” The latter is understood as a revival movement that grew, inspired by John Wesley’s

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<sup>2</sup> See John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 76. A number of scholars have analyzed the development of the doctrine of holiness in American Methodism. Though some of them see modification of the doctrine, particularly the late nineteenth century shift from the Wesleyan cleansing motifs to the Pentecostal “baptism of the Spirit” language, the essential components of a holiness theology that demands a religious experience in addition to original conversion did not change. The best study of holiness within American Methodism so far is that of John L. Peters, *Christian Perfection in American Methodism* (Salem, OR: Schmul Publishing Co., 1995).

teachings on Christian perfection or holiness, out of American Methodism from the 1830s and that influenced the larger Protestant world globally. It developed into two major subdivisions by the end of the nineteenth century. These two may be defined as "Wesleyan holiness," emphasizing instantaneous "entire sanctification" and "Keswick holiness," stressing gradual sanctification or simply "the higher life." Melvin E. Dieter has rightly alluded to the kinship of the two and thus argued:

The postwar revival of holiness evangelism by the Palmers in England and Scotland after the American Revival of 1858 had done as much as anything else to prepare the way for the great explosion of the doctrine across England and the Continent in the 1870s. The revival meeting of James Caughey, the Methodist holiness evangelist, and the visits of American evangelists during the Second Great Awakening also helped to spread the dominantly Wesleyan perfectionist revivalism from the American movement across the British Isles.<sup>3</sup>

Several scholars have traced the theological roots of Pentecostalism to the radicalization of holiness theology. Donald W. Dayton has argued that the late nineteenth century triumph of Spirit baptism within the holiness movement paved way for the emergence of the Pentecostal movement. Vinson Synan's research affirms that in "the decades of the 1890s a major shift began to appear among many holiness leaders emphasizing the 'Pentecostal' aspects of the second blessing." African Pentecostalism, which often took the form of African Initiated Churches (AICs), drew its holiness theological heritage directly from American or western Pentecostalism or through radicalization of Keswick and Wesleyan/Methodist holiness theology in the African context.<sup>4</sup> This revivalist/holiness conception of the theology of the AICs has been identified by a number of scholars and in a variety of cases around the African continent. The current investigation is well served here by Charles E. Jones' 1987 bibliography in *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionist and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements*.<sup>5</sup> Jones used the facts of the segregative aspects of racism in the

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<sup>3</sup> Melvin E. Dieter, *The Holiness Revivals of the Nineteenth Century* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 128. The historical fact that African Wesleyan holiness revivals share commonalities with African Keswick holiness revivals warrants an integrated interpretive framework. Keswick holiness conventions that stirred a global holiness movement were in turn catalyzed by the American holiness revivalism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> See D. W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 87-113 and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Charles E. Jones, *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionist and Glossolalia Pentecostal Movements* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1987).

United States and colonialism in Africa as the basis of extracting black related materials from his previous bibliographic compendium, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (1983) and his monumental work, *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (1974).<sup>6</sup> On one key point would Jones see the rationale for including what he termed “leader-centered bodies in Africa,” which we are referring to here as “the African initiated churches.” He has rightly stated that despite the fact that the “leader-centered” groups in Africa have “received much scorn from other black Holiness churches,” their emphasis “on emotional experience, faith healing, and puritanical standards of behavior justifies their inclusion” in *Black Holiness*.<sup>7</sup> This research, therefore, intends to demonstrate the pervasive nature of the holiness concept through African Protestant Christianity.

## 2. Ecclesiastical Historiographies of Africa

Those who struggle with nationalist versus missionary historiographies and issues of “indigeneity” prefer to emphasize African initiatives in Christianity at the expense of historical theological expressions during the colonial era. This represents the most dominant church historiographical method that focuses on African initiative and socio-political aspects of Christianity. Akin to this spirit was an argument represented in this statement: “an African church history that begins with missionary institutions - and especially those with missionary initiatives - is bound to stress the foreign nature of the faith.”<sup>8</sup> This methodological proposal takes the poor as normative for theologizing, minimizes the role of western theologies in alleviating poverty, and sees the meeting point between Christianity and the African people as an encounter between two equally viable cosmologies. The starting point for African church history, therefore, is taken as “Africa and its cultures.”<sup>9</sup> While the pursuit of the

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<sup>6</sup> Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Pentecostal Movement* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1983) and *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Jones, *Black Holiness*, 188.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Jenkins, “The Roots of Church History: Some Polemical Thoughts,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10, no. 2 (April 1986): 67-71. This view has provoked vigorous debate. Sanneh has called for western missions to be “unhinged from the narrow colonial context and placed in the much wider setting of African culture, including the religious background of the African societies.” in “The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7, no. 24 (Oct. 1983): 165-171.

<sup>9</sup> Ogbu U. Kalu, “Church Presence in Africa: A Historical Analysis of the Evangelization Process,” *African Theology En Route*, eds. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (New York: Orbis, 1979), 14. In Kalu’s latest work, he takes “cognizance that nationalist historiography objects to predicting of African periodization on European events,” but using a proverb that “the cricket whose son is roasted is part of the tradition of roasting crickets,” he seems to have ameliorated some of his earlier sharper arguments. While discussing evangelical revivals and their fruit toward African missions, he thus notes

under-represented African initiatives in missions is noble in itself, in the move toward establishing “authentically” African Christian thought, theological themes that undergirded the missionary venture are often either ignored or dismissed because of their western origins. One of the major casualties of these reductionistic theories is the doctrine of holiness and its associated dynamics as they were implanted in Africa. Because of the inadequate “treatment of the dogmatic and symbolic content of the Revival movement in missionary Protestantism,” as argued by Ranger,<sup>10</sup> the theme of holiness is given underdeveloped introductory acknowledgments and mentioned only in passing, often in derision, within larger frameworks of African ecclesiastical histories.

These historiographical problems are evident not only in the way African church history has been recorded but in the way a number of African theologians have prescribed theological methodologies for Africa. Three African theologians, Kwesi Dickson, John S. Pobee, and Itumeleng Mosala who have attempted to dialogue with evangelical piety in their theological proposals, are employed here to demonstrate the validity of the above observation. Dickson has argued against what he understood as imposition of a “western” form of soteriology. For him, this is exemplified in the fact that “the classical Protestant theological sequence of faith leading to salvation, followed by works and sanctification, which was the basis of missionary teaching,” implied that “chronological distinctions exist between ‘the so-called’ stages in the Christian life”. He viewed this as “highly questionable” because, for him, “in Africa life is seen as a whole, undifferentiated into religion and life, into life in the spirit and in the flesh; it would be alien to the African to cut up life into watertight compartments.” The delineation of discipleship into steps of growth in grace, for Dickson, would be suspected for potentially leading to “serious contradictions in the African convert’s life”.<sup>11</sup> There was little attempt, in Dickson’s corpus, to show how Wesley understood how the *ordo salutis* works, which may not have been as “compartmentalized” as Dickson would have us believe. Secondly, to argue that these soteriological categories paved the way to a “compartmentalized world-view,” and that Africans were entirely holistic in their world-view are contestable. In natural life, also mirrored in rituals and spiritual ceremonies, Africans understand life to be divided into steps that, though continuous, are each distinct from the other. These stages

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that as in the case of the watershed Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the First World War, “Africa was involved in all these.” Ogbu U. Kalu, *Power, Poverty and Prayer: The Challenges of Poverty and Pluralism in African Christianity, 1960-1996* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 12-16.

<sup>10</sup> T. O. Ranger and John Weller, eds. *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1975).

<sup>11</sup> Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), 96.

of growth begin with birth, puberty rites, marriage and death. Interestingly, the Methodist Church in Ghana, where Dickson comes from, actually had a head start with a commission in the 1940s recommending that the Bible message be adapted to all stages of growth as understood by Africans.<sup>12</sup>

In an article congenial to our specific theme of piety, Dickson has documented that Methodist missionaries and preachers in Ghana gave “much attention to Christian Perfection [and] personal journals and letters witness to their having been very conscious of this teaching as part of Methodist heritage.” This historical reality, however, was perceived not to have constituted a positive development because of two issues raised by Dickson. These issues were stated as “that the Methodist preaching and teaching have not seemed to constitute a potential force for change in the context of Africa” and that “the edge of the teaching [of holiness] was blunted by the fact that the church tried to separate its members from the particularity of their circumstances.”<sup>13</sup>

Itumeleng Mosala of South Africa is another contemporary African Methodist scholar who has concluded that the holiness or pietistic theology was basically irrelevant for any positive interpretation of Christianity in Africa. He has positively appropriated Wesley’s theology as emphasizing individual self-worth. He has, nevertheless, been quick to say that Methodism does not provide “an alternative ideological framework in which that self-worth can be made a reality.” Mosala borrowed deeply from Latin American and American Black liberation theology. It was in this process that Mosala basically saw John Wesley’s theology of sanctification as insisting on the “sinfulness of the poor and the oppressed” thus fostering a “deceptive and oppressive egalitarianism.” Wesley’s “spiritual egalitarianism remained ideologically circumscribed and a prisoner of his conservative politics.” Mosala, who has become convinced that black theology is “the theological discourse that has drawn attention to black people, their culture, history and struggles as a crucial part of the process of sanctifying the world,” has come to the conclusion that South African Methodism had failed, “due to inability of the dominant Methodist doctrine to

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<sup>12</sup> I Will Build My Church: “The Report of the Commission Appointed by the Synod of the Methodist Church, Gold Coast, to Consider the Life of the Church” (St. Albans: The Campfield Press, 1948), 32. A critical analysis of this document has been done by F.L. Bartels who commented that this report was largely inspired by Maurice B. Taylor who was the chairman of the synod; See F.L. Bartels, *The Roots of Ghana Methodism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 218-222 and Robert T. Parsons, *The Churches and Ghana Society 1918-1955: A Survey of Three Protestant Mission Societies and the African Church which They Established in their Assistance to Societary Development* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 156.

<sup>13</sup> Kwesi A. Dickson, “The Methodist Witness and the African Situation,” in *Sanctification and Liberation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 198.

accommodate liberative theological practice.” For him, the only way to enable Methodist theology to become a “liberative discourse” is to relocate it ideologically.<sup>14</sup> This is definitely a prescriptive theological historiography that seeks to point to the future rather than present accurate historical analysis.

A similar trend is clear in the interpretation of the East African Revival by scholars such as John Martin who have argued that in Rwanda eight out of ten people claimed to be Christian yet the country was beleaguered by ethnic purification in the same manner as the former Yugoslavia. These massacres, according to him, could be blamed on the shortcomings of the East African Revival Movement and missionary legacies for lacking social engagement, limiting stress on human rights, failing to give systematic instructions, retreating to “apolitical” pietism that substituted testimonies for Biblical instruction and for emphasizing private morality over structural evil or corporate sin. He has also asserted that these omissions led to naive obedience and ‘cheap grace’ “which did not convert racial bias, the feelings of ethnic superiority or the long-held grudges of one [group] of people against another.”<sup>15</sup> What Martin chose not to discuss is whether ethnic clashes in this Central African region were not, in themselves, an advocacy of tribal ethos that were in essence going against the inter-tribal/inter-racial nature of the revivals.<sup>16</sup> One also wonders whether any systematic theological teachings would have averted ethnic cleansing in Rwanda any more than the experiential unity espoused by the revivals could have done. It must also be granted that the complex components of the holiness ethos can be skewed and abused as oppressive structures when taken in a non-holistic manner. Martin’s critique cannot be the final word on revivalism and ethnic conflicts in Africa. The situation was much more complex and the doctrine of ethnic cleansing was, as a matter of fact, an antithesis to the doctrines of the revival, no matter how weak the latter were.<sup>17</sup> This writer finds Meg Guillebaud’s

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<sup>14</sup> Itumeleng Mosala, “Wesley Read from the Experience of Social and Political Deprivation in South Africa,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 68, no. 1 (September 1989): 86-90.

<sup>15</sup> John Martin, “Revivalism and Ethnic Conflict,” in *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Mission and Ethics* (April/June 1995): 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Sentiments similar to those of Martin have been stated by Mercy Amba Oduyoye. The missionary policy of “come apart and be saved,” according to Oduyoye has resulted in enclaves called “Christian villages” which tended to run away from the social dimension of Christianity. See *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (New York: Orbis Books, 1986), 40. See also the writings of a leading East African novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *A Grain of Wheat*, in which one finds the holiness “apocalyptic version of the gospel” castigated for being “irrelevant to the struggle for political and economic independence,” and for merely playing “into the hands of British colonialism.”

<sup>17</sup> We have to consider, for instance, the “The Hutu Ten Commandments” enacted at the heights of political tensions, with an anti-Tutsi agenda on every point, as the very

analysis of the situation in Rwanda more convincing, because it recognizes that though missionaries put much emphasis on evangelism, social dimensions of the gospel were not neglected. According to Guillebaud, who also argues that the Revival was at low ebb in the Rwandan church immediately before the 1994 genocide, during its zenith “one deep-rooted evil which was tackled in the Revival was the evil of racism ... There was no room for divisions on ethnic grounds - there was no Hutu or Tutsi, Black or White, Burundians or Rwandan.”<sup>18</sup> Even those who argue against the colonial abuse of the revivalist doctrines find in the former themes that catered for both Europeans and Africans. Despite his earlier disparaging of revivalism as a colonial tool a leading African novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, has reappraised the East African Revival as being racially integrated, for influencing the spiritual formation of most of the African clergy of the major Protestant denominations and for having virtually no bureaucracy.<sup>19</sup>

Klaus Fiedler, a contemporary German theologian with a more positive appropriation of holiness as instrumental for missionary inspiration, has opined that holiness was a revival doctrine intended to criticize established church structures. As there were no such structures to criticize yet in Africa, missionaries, consequently, were understood to have found it unnecessary to focus on holiness during the early stages of their missionary work. Fiedler’s study is based on three problematic presuppositions that saw the message as basically suited only for the missionary’s homeland. Fiedler viewed holiness in Africa through the eyes of loosely defined “faith missions” principles that shut off “classical missions,” and other denominational agencies, even within faith mission parameters. The missionaries therefore “did not try to build holiness structures in Africa they were used to, such as conferences, camp meetings, and fellowship groups ... translate holiness literature into African languages, nor did they write their own holiness literature in such languages.” Implicit in this thesis was a dual view of missions where “the larger holiness missions” are thought to have sought “to evangelize (non-European) non Christians and to spread the holiness message among the (European) Christians.”<sup>20</sup>

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anti-thesis of the trans-ethnic community that the East African Revival had clearly articulated. See Hugh McCullum, *The Angels Have Left Us: The Rwanda Tragedy and the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 114-115.

<sup>18</sup> Meg Guillebaud, *Rwanda: The Land God Forgot? Revival, Genocide and Hope* (London: Monarch Books, 2002), 324. Meg Guillebaud is a third generation missionary in Rwanda. Her parents and grandparents were bred within the revivalist traditions and had major roles in the emergence of the EAR. Her book, based on family records, is a candid analysis of the relationship between the genocide and Revival.

<sup>19</sup> Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Weep Not Child* (London: Heinemann, 1964), 26.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Fiedler’s 1991 D.Th. dissertation at the University of Heidelberg has been published as *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to the Present Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994), 53, 247-248.

### 3. The East Africa Revival and Holiness

In the twentieth century, particularly from the 1930s to the 1950s, there was a strong wave of revivals that swept the entire African continent such that the entire region rightly deserved to be referred to as "burnt-over", as if by the fire of the Holy Spirit. The most well-researched of these spectacular occurrences in the Sub-Saharan Protestant Churches is the influential East African Revival of the 1930s through the 1960s. This Revival spread religious fervor throughout mainline, evangelical and Pentecostal churches, as well as African Initiated Churches within the region.<sup>21</sup> The actual place and circumstances surrounding the beginning of the 1930s revivals, however, may not be well described by a monolithic interpretation that stresses an Anglican preference. Just as the emergence of Keswick in England led to a host of sanctificationist missionaries that went with the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) and numerous others that went with faith missions (non-Anglican missions such as Africa Inland Mission and China Inland Mission), the East African Revival depicts an ecumenical phenomenon that crossed denominational boundaries.

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<sup>21</sup> Jocelyn Murray has formulated a useful bibliography of studies on the movement through 1976. See Jocelyn Murray, "A Bibliography on the East African Revival Movement," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 8, no. 2 (1976): 144-147. First, she has shown that a number of European missionaries, particularly doctors, were involved. Bill Butler, a CMS missionary in Ruanda, outlined his involvement in the revival in his autobiography, *Hill Ablaze* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1976). See also Patricia St. John's *Man of Two Worlds: The Life of Ken Moynagh* (Worthing, Sussex: Henry E. Walker, 1976), a memoir of a missionary doctor's involvement in the revival. Second, Murray bibliography provides an ethnically diverse list of Africans who were involved in the revival. Joe E. Church, a C.M.S missionary doctor in Uganda, who was a key initiator of the EAR, authored several of them. His biographies are *Awake! Awake! The Story of Blasio Kigozi* (Kampala: Uganda Bookshop Press, 1937), the story of Yona Kanamuzeyi of Ruanda as *Forgive Them: The Story of an African Martyr* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1966), and *William Nagenda – A Great Lover of Jesus* (London: C.M.S. Ruanda Mission, 1973). Church's autobiography, *Quest for the Highest*, was published in 1981. Wanyoike Ernest in *An African Pastor: The Life and Work of Rev. Wanyoike Kamawe 1888-1970* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974) discusses the role of the revival in the life of this Kenyan minister. Third, Murray has shown that the revival was influential during the Mau Mau upheaval and the State of Emergency declared by the colonial regime in the Kenya of 1952. Her list includes Bidad Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom 1921-1963* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975) which discusses the conversion of this freedom fighter in the East African Revival. Edith M. Wiseman's *Kikuyu Martyr* (London: Highway Press, 1958) describes the lives of Kikuyu Christians influenced by the revival and who were killed during the Emergency. Fourth, she has also included a Swahili hymn book KITABU CHA KUSIFU (Nairobi: Majestic Printing Works, 1972), which has the revival anthem, *Tukutendereza*, adopted from Keswick hymnody. For a view of the EAR during Idi Amin's regime in Uganda see Kefa A. Sempangi, *A Distant Grief* (Ventura, Ca: Regal Books, 1979).



When other studies of the East African Revival, mostly among mainline Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian churches,<sup>22</sup> are added to the scarcely touched primary materials of the smaller Wesleyan holiness missions operating in the same location, a complex and yet very compelling holiness picture of East African Christianity is revealed. A Protestant church that was most unreceptive to the revival was the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. With the arrival of Bishop Bengt Sundkler, however, this church welcomed the revival and Sundkler himself made significant theological contributions to the revival. Josiah Kibira, one of the key leaders of the church, has stated that despite some weakness, the revival saved the Church from "spiritual decay."<sup>23</sup>

The kaleidoscopic nature of this revival was demonstrated by the presence of people of different social levels and from various religious backgrounds. There was a strong feeling that this movement would be a vehicle for church unity in East Africa. In Ruanda-Urundi (as these central African nations were known then), the formation of the Protestant Alliance was spawned by a desire to recapture the unity of New Testament Christianity. Joe Church's words at the close of the Muyebe Alliance Conference in 1942, illustrates this desire more vividly:

The final Breaking of Bread taken by a Methodist, a Baptist and a C. of E. layman, with Africans and missionaries seated around a big room, was the nearest we probably will ever get to those earliest days of Christianity, after the Love Feast was instituted by our Lord.<sup>24</sup>

In Kenya, "The Deed of Foundation and the Deed of Church Order" of the British-related Methodist Church has paid homage to the doctrine of holiness but for a long time most of the Methodist adherents in the country have "forgotten" this heritage. The irony is that the Methodists' theological

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<sup>22</sup> Festo Kivengere, who emerged as a key exponent of Keswick holiness in East Africa and perhaps the most renowned product of the East Africa Revival, indicated in an interview that though "the Lutherans, found it hard to move fast at first," the revivals have not only spread geographically to many areas of Uganda, Tanzania, Zaire, Ghana, Ethiopia, Ruanda, Burundi and Malawi but that even the strength and sustenance of the Kenyan church during the Mau Mau nationalist uprisings was due to "Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and others" who had been blessed through the revivals. Of course, the Methodists of Kenya at this point were not drawing their sanctificationist doctrines direct from their founder John Wesley but as mediated through the Keswick movement. See Festo Kivengere, "The Revival That Was and Is: An Interview with Festo Kivengere" *Christianity Today* 20, no. 17 (May 21, 1976): 10-14.

<sup>23</sup> Josiah Kibira, "The Church in Buhaya: Crossing Frontiers" in *The Church Crossing Frontiers: Essays on the Nature of Mission in Honor of Bengt Sundkler*, eds. Peter Beyerhaus and Carl F. Hallencreutz (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1969), 189-205.

<sup>24</sup> J.E. Church, *Quest for the Highest* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1981), 194.

self-understanding in Kenya derives holiness from the Keswick wave through the East African Revival and not from their original Wesleyan roots implied in "The Deed." Methodist revivalists sponsored the famous Kaaga Convention in April 1953. This was modeled after the Keswick Convention and was held in the middle of the State of Emergency declared by the colonial government in response to political agitations. Fred W. Valender, a Methodist missionary in Meru, who had himself become one of the revivalists, indicates that the movement arrived from Rwanda into Meruland in the late 1940s.<sup>25</sup>

The Free Methodist Church is one of the earliest holiness breakaways from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the American context. John Haley's thesis, corroborated through both Free Methodist and Anglican original documents, has it that the East African Revival began at Free Methodist stations in Muyebe in Ruanda-Urundi when the missionaries themselves began to pray and confess their own lack of spiritual grace. They confessed their divisions, their spiritual coldness, and their materialistic ambitions. Soon "the native teachers and evangelists, and then the lay members also began to pray" for an experience of the same reality. Then from here, according to Haley, "this revival has spread to other missions in the territory and up into Uganda." This Free Methodist missionary, as reported by Meg Guillebaud, "emphasized the need for the holiness of God to be reflected by holy living," and used these perfectionist principles to negotiate unity among the missionaries of the CMS who had been deeply divided over the revivals. Smith reports that in June 1945, as a result of Haley's prayers, "God's love was shed abroad" in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. The Wesleyan interpreters of the East African Revival tell us that

in 1946 more than one missionary expressed deep gratitude to J.W. Haley for bringing the missionaries together in real prayer for a revival. One hears Anglicans, Baptists and Lutherans pray together for a revival by the power of the Holy Spirit in good old-fashioned Methodist terms.<sup>26</sup>

The "Ruanda Movement," as the East African Revival was commonly called in Kenya in the 1930s, reshaped the theologies and ecclesiologies not only of the Methodist/Wesleyan and Anglican churches but also, least

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<sup>25</sup> Deed of Foundation and Deed of Church Order for the Constituting of The Conference of the Methodist Church in Kenya (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1966). See also Fred W. Valender, *A Mustard Seed: How it Grew into the Methodist Church in Kenya* (Seaton Delaval: Christian Aid, 1987), 62-76.

<sup>26</sup> The quotations above can be found in Byron S. Lamson, *Lights in the World: Free Methodist Missionary Work* (Winona Lake: General Missionary Board, 1951), 168-173 and Guillebaud, *Rwanda: The Land God Forgot?* 115.

expected, of the Presbyterian Church. There is, therefore, a significant body of research that has recently begun to investigate the extent to which the revival influenced East African Presbyterianism. This church draws the large bulk of its membership from the Kikuyu ethnic group. As the church was facing numerical decline and reversion to "drunkenness, filthy customs and even to polygamous life," the revival introduced the holiness doctrine of "the power that cleanses sin and enables one to experience victory."

The concept of cleansing, as David Githii has articulated, resonated well with this context, and many were "eager to accept the message of being washed by the blood of Christ" because, "after all, the concept of cleansing power of the blood from all kinds of guilt had deep roots among the Kikuyu and many other tribes in Kenya."<sup>27</sup> But it was also a decisive switch of authority and symbolism from animal sacrifices to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. This explains why there was a significant conflict between the Mau Mau oaths and the revivalist ethos. The Kikuyu martyrs of this period would die pronouncing to the Mau Mau advocates: "I have drunk the blood of Christ, how can I take your blood of goats?"

Derek Peterson's study of the Tumutumu Presbyterian Church, though done with a reductionistic sociological view of the revival that saw the East African Revival as a way that "Gikuyu women and men talked about moral and economic change," also revealed the appropriation of the sanctification motifs in an African context. Because the Gikuyu society knew that sorcerers sucked the life out of their neighbors, adding to their own wealth at the expense of others, the "Revivalists [in this context] thought their salvation cleansed them of the pollution of sorcery ... [and the] Revivalists' public confession of sin looked like cleansing ceremonies." After token resistance, Chogoria (1948), North Kiambu (1949), and other presbyteries incorporated "the Movement" within their own church lives. Consequently, as MacPherson has argued, "the church and the revival came to terms" through a mutual agreement where "the need of the church to accept revival and for the revival movement when it comes to operate within the church" was acknowledged. To a significant extent, "the Revival made an essential contribution to the life of the Presbyterian Church in Kenya, and to all the churches in East Africa which came to terms with it."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> David M. Githii, *The East African Revival Movement and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa*. Th. M. Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1992, 39-45.

<sup>28</sup> Derek Peterson, "Wordy Women: Gender Trouble and the Oral Politics of the East African Revival in Northern Gikuyuland," *Journal of African History* 42 (2001): 469-489; E. N. Wanyoike, *An African Pastor* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), 196; and R. MacPherson, *The Presbyterian Omdrl in Kenya* (Nairobi: The Presbyterian

#### 4. Revivalist Versus Africanist Paradigms: AICs and Holiness

There is a general assumption in the historiography of much of African Christianity that African Initiated Churches were founded as reactionary, sectarian, anti-missionary, anti-white, Africanist and rebellious movements that sought to supplant missionary theologies through a reversion to African cultural practices, or a revival of 'tribal *zeitgeist*' as David Barrett would argue. This, consequently, has led to denigration of their theology as an attempt to move away from 'orthodox Christianity' to the African traditional past. The former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, recalled the days when "the so-called 'mainline' churches looked down disdainfully at the odd phenomenon called independent or indigenous churches." They were known as movements "with hardly any decent theology, often led by illiterate persons, with an odd mix of clearly pagan beliefs," and were at best syncretistic and heretical.<sup>29</sup> All these caricatures may or may not have been accurate generalizations. They were at best misleading and have precipitated much propaganda from the 'mainstream' churches, including from respected scholars, against those on the fringes of African Christianity. But, even those who have been attempting to positively appropriate the AIC theology, perhaps out of a genuine effort to establish an authentic African religious experience, have propagated the Africanist paradigm. Scholars such as Linda E. Thomas, for instance, tend to emphasize the African cultural origins of AIC theology.<sup>30</sup> The pejorative aspect is, however, changing partly because the center of

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Church of East Africa, 1970), 126. MacPherson reports that "in the late 1940s, the Revival added a new dimension to the quest for union as was thus understood to foster genuine indigenous expression of Christianity in East African forms of worship, discipline and organization." This was celebrated as undercutting the perpetuation of forms developed by various Churches overseas and imported into Kenya by the missionaries. The fellowship and catholicity engendered by the movement continued in the "post-Revival Church." In 1951, a small clique of ministers began to contemplate church union. Their efforts culminated in the famous Kirk Session held at St. Andrews' Presbyterian Church in Nairobi which made the proposal that "there should be one church (in East Africa) with no distinction on race or color." The revival was, therefore, at once a solution to the growing colonial racism and to the perennial tribalism. Welbourn saw this movement as "the only religious society which genuinely passed tribal boundaries" and as "one of the most vital Christian movements in East Africa". A study of the official doctrinal documents of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), therefore, may not yield much of a holiness disposition. There was, however, a decisive holiness influence through the East African Revival to the extent that this church's official decision making organs were thoroughly informed by this piety. See R. MacPherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (Nairobi: The Presbyterian Church of East Africa), 1970, 126.

<sup>29</sup> Tutu, the forward to *Afro-Christianity at the Grassroots: Its Dynamics and Strategies*, ed. G. C. Oosthuizen, M. C. Kitshoff and S. W. D. Dube (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), vii.

<sup>30</sup> Linda E. Thomas, *Under the Canopy: Ritual Process and Spiritual Resilience in South Africa* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

gravity of Christianity has not only shifted from the northern to the southern hemisphere, but has shifted within the south itself, from the mission-founded churches to the African initiated bodies as argued by Philip Jenkins. He has argued quite convincingly that:

To use the language of revivalism, Africa has now for over a century been engaged in a continuous encounter with Pentecostal fires, and the independent churches have been the most obvious products of that highly creative process. In American terms, much of the continent has served as one vast, burnt-over district.<sup>31</sup>

This shift in African Christianity is so radical that an African church leader who has published on holiness does not come from the holiness movement as we traditionally know it, but from an African initiated church which grew out of the *Aladura* movement of Western Africa. This is William F. Kumuyi, the founding pastor of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Lagos, Nigeria, the largest single congregation in Africa.<sup>32</sup> While there are definite complexities and no simplistic proposal can be made that applies in every case, there is compelling evidence that suggest some AICs are no more 'African Indigenous Churches' than the Church of the Nazarene is an 'American Indigenous Church'.

Did African independence always produce independence in personnel and in theology? Was an African initiative always synonymous with indigeneity and always equal to a rejection of the 'foreignness' of the gospel? Recent research on indigenous movements elsewhere has shown that having indigenous leadership or being an indigenous initiative was not always synonymous with indigenous theology. David Bundy has offered a useful review of Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* which does two major things. The first is expanding "Wesleyan/holiness and Pentecostal" hermeneutical categories in Japan beyond the "foreign dependent and/or foreign mission founded institutions" to include "indigenous movements as well." The second expands Mullins' thesis to other regions of the world thus revealing "that 'indigeneity' is a much more complex factor than has been generally recognized." Thus Bundy rightfully says that there are Wesleyan/holiness, Keswick Holiness, and traditional Pentecostal aspects to the development of the African Initiated Churches. Although Mullins' sociological studies of indigenous Christianity in Japan tilt toward the concept that these movements were founded by "charismatic individuals who accept the Christian faith but reject the missionary carriers and their 'Western' and 'doctrinal' understanding of religion," a significant portion of the movements he documented in Japan grew out of the holiness revivals within missionary

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<sup>31</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 51.

<sup>32</sup> See William F. Kumuyi, *Holiness Made Easy* (Lagos: Zoe Publishing Co., 1980).

structures and carried similar visions into the new.<sup>33</sup>

Andrew Walls has noted that “perhaps the African Independent Churches, so often considered as ‘a place to feel at home’ as indigenizing, even as syncretizing movements, should also be looked on sometimes as radically reforming biblicist movements, the Anabaptists of Africa.”<sup>34</sup> They were an “African Reformation” as mirrored in Allan Anderson’s more recent work.<sup>35</sup> Walls’ and Anderson’s assessments of AICs compare them to the Reformation rather than to revivals. But my argument here is closer to that of scholars like Akin J. Omoyajoyo who sees AICs as a reflection of “the Montanist Movement of the early church or as I may add ‘the Pietists of Africa’, indeed the ultimate development of the revivalist theology in this fertile African soil.”<sup>36</sup>

In order to understand the theology of the AICs one must suspend any radical delineation between their theology and that of the mainline or historical churches. Kwame Bediako has given a well-articulated critique of the mainline/historical church view of the AICs represented by scholars such as Christian Baeta who have seen these groups as “a grave menace to the normal development of a healthy Christianity” in the continent.<sup>37</sup> We, therefore, concur with Bediako’s analysis that:

The distinctions between the historical churches, of missionary origin, and the independent or African instituted churches, have since become less meaningful, as features which were once thought to be characteristic of the latter have been found to be shared also by the former. The significance of the independents, therefore, has been that they pointed to the direction in which broad sections of African Christianity were moving, and so they testified to the existence of some generalized trends in the African response to the Christian faith in African terms.<sup>38</sup>

It is not only from the mainline denominations that the AICs tend to be

<sup>33</sup> See Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 32. See also David Bundy, “Defining Wesleyan/Holiness Identity: The Historiographical, Theological, and Missiological Challenges Posed by Indigenous Traditions, The Case of Japan,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 2000), 256-261.

<sup>34</sup> Walls, “Africa’s Place in Christianity,” *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, 188-189.

<sup>35</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Note the title for Anderson’s book *African Reformation*, and Akin J. Omoyajoyo, “An African Expression of Christianity,” in *The Challenge of Black Theology in South Africa* edited by Basil Moore (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 90.

<sup>37</sup> Christian G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of some Spiritual Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1962), ix; Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 65-66.

<sup>38</sup> Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 66.

dissociated. There have been concerted efforts, perhaps out of embarrassment from being associated with these “Bantu movements,” to dissociate them from what Donald Dayton has called their “distant cousins,”<sup>39</sup> American Pentecostalism as represented by their mission agencies in Africa. Allan Anderson, who has also argued for the distinction between evangelical and Pentecostal in Africa, has identified three broad categories of Pentecostals in South Africa: the Pentecostal mission churches which are predominantly white, independent Pentecostal churches under black leadership, and Indigenous Pentecostal-type churches, also known as ‘Spirit’ or ‘Zionist Churches’.<sup>40</sup> He has used the Pentecostal category to challenge F. P. Moller’s enigmatic and ahistorical thesis that “the only groups in Southern Africa which can be classified under the heading Pentecostal are those linked with white churches”. Moller excluded “all the Bantu groups” whose ecstasy was thought to be “better explained in the light of their heathen background.”<sup>41</sup> Moller was not alone in his assessment. Gary B. McGee has argued that inclusion of “African Zionists, Kimbanguists, and Spiritual Baptists from the Caribbean” among Pentecostals “stretches the definitions beyond utility.”<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.1 *The Holiness Movement in Central Africa*

A methodology that tends to rely on the latter more polemical phases of the AICs in Africa in order to state the purpose for their existence when the original revivalist intents had become obscured is misleading. Efraim Andersson provides a good example of those who intend to show “the radical differences between a true revival and the messianic movements.” Andersson used a dual litmus test in order to elucidate an authentic revival: that of “the ethical standards” and that of “the relation to the whites, especially the mission and the missionaries.” He has rightfully stated that “in its original form Nguzism

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<sup>39</sup> Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> Allan Anderson, *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992), 2-7.

<sup>41</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 171. The possibility of an African provenance of the global Pentecostal movement is still a contentious issue. Leonard Lovett argued for the black origins of the movement in Vinson Synan, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*; Cheryl Sanders argued that Pentecostal features such as trances, ecstatic speeches, and rituals have their origin in African traditional religions, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostal Missiology: Moving Beyond Triumphalism to Face the Issues,” *Pneuma* 16:2 (1994), 275-81. On this point, we agree with Anderson’s assessment that with some qualifications there are historical and theological connections between classical Pentecostal and the AICs that Moller, McGee and others fail to recognize. See Allan Anderson, “Stretching Definitions? Pneumatology and ‘Syncretism’ in African Pentecostalism”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 10:1 (2001), 98-119.

possessed many characteristic features of a revival," and that "Kimbangu's attitude to the missionaries was from the onset positive."<sup>43</sup> But what carries the day in a large section of AICs' historiography is the false perception that AICs from the beginning displayed a deep gulf between religion and morality on the one hand, and an increasingly anti-white attitude, on the other. Both the missionaries and the colonial masters saw them as anti-white, proto-nationalist, religiously syncretistic, and as threats to the mission churches.<sup>44</sup>

The prophet movements in the Congo, as paradoxical as it may sound, therefore, can be better studied within the context of the holiness missions that flooded this "heart of Africa" in the late nineteenth century. Although meant to ridicule the missionary theology of conversion as sometimes "too optimistic," the following words of Efraim Andersson are helpful in linking the theology of the Prophet movements with holiness revivalism. Andersson claimed, "evangelical missionaries with more or less Pietistic leanings did not set out for the Congo in order to transform its inhabitants into nominal Christians." He held that the Banza Manteke revivals started as sporadic occurrences that soon became "general and permanent mass movements, forming the background from which the first prophet movement emerged."<sup>45</sup> Andrew MacBeath, who described this revival within the Baptist Missionary Society, clearly showed that the Congo events were inspired by the growing global holiness networks and particularly informed by the Keswick "higher life" movement.<sup>46</sup>

A survey of the missionary literature tends to support an Africanist and anti-missionary interpretation of the Kimbanguist movement. But when this evidence was compared with the Kimbanguists' self-understanding, a different picture emerges. The Kimbanuists appreciated that missionaries came to shine the light of the Gospel but the Kimbanguists themselves did not see their movement as a renewal of African traditions but as an attempt to renew authentic missionary Christianity. These Africans believed "the missionaries did not obey the voice of the Lord," because

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<sup>43</sup> Efraim Anderson, *Messianic Popular Movements in Lower Congo* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell), 1958, 42-47. Nguzism refers to an AIC in the Congo.

<sup>44</sup> See Jocelyn Murray, "The Kikuyu Spirit Churches", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 5.3 (1973), 198. See also J.P. Kiernan, *The Production and Management of Therapeutic Power in Zionist Churches Within a Zulu City* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 17. Kiernan has persuasively argued that a survey of literature on beliefs, patterns of worship, sentiments and behavior in the African Independent Church movements for anti-White rejection, "produces very little evidence."

<sup>45</sup> E. Andersson, *Messianic Popular Movements in Lower Congo*, 42-47.

<sup>46</sup> Keswick holiness was instrumental for this revival because Andrew MacBeath, who was the key leader, was associated with Keswick himself. He wrote a biography of one of the key leaders of Keswick. See Andrew MacBeath, *W. H. Aldis* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1949).



they did not evangelize extensively into the villages, and thus "many villages showed not a single convert." So this movement began, at least as they understood themselves, not by calling on Africans to return to their traditions, but by counteracting the same traditional values that popular missionary literature usually presented them as preserving. It is in this light that it makes sense to see them as renewing the missionary message because the failure of the missionary method had meant "the people as a whole did not leave their wickedness; fetishism, dancing, drinking and witchcraft."<sup>47</sup> Kimbanguism may be better understood, at least in its initial stages, as neither "an anti-white movement nor only negative reaction to white religious, political, or social exploitations." Kimbangu himself rejected "tribalism as a rigid and divisive sociological construct." They displayed, as George B. Thomas concluded, a "genuine African Christian life style in terms of personal self-discipline and organizational self-determination," seeking to emphasize the "inter-tribal and inter-racial character of the church" and sanctification as a key tenet.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.2 The Holiness Movement in East Africa

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton described the Spirit Church movement in East Africa as "possession by the Holy Spirit". She attributed this phenomenon to the combined impact of the East African Revival of the 1930s, ecstatic African independent churches, and Pentecostal missions in Africa.<sup>49</sup> This points to the fact that these movements actually represented different versions of holiness theology, each controlled by their individual contextual needs. Welbourn and Ogot have given a credible account on how Marian and Otto Keller, Canadian holiness Pentecostal missionaries, who established a mission in Nyangori near Kisumu (western Kenya) were instrumental in the introduction of spontaneous worship that led to the liturgical basis for the emerging independent African Israel Church, Nineveh (AICN). But the process that led to AICN's formation was much more complex and shows a spiraling of theology from the American holiness movement conception of sanctification, to Pentecostalism, and finally to an African initiated church. The process that had already taken place in the west was being repeated, conditioned by a particular social

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<sup>47</sup> A pamphlet by Dialugana Salomon, the second son of Kimbangu, was quoted verbatim by John M. Janzen, "The Tradition of Renewal in Kongo Religion" in *African Religions: A Symposium* edited by Newell S. Booth (New York: Nok Publishers, 1977, 73, and clearly states the pietistic requirements of Kimbanguism.

<sup>48</sup> George B. Thomas, "Kimbanguism: Authentically African, Authentically Christian," in *African Religions: A Symposium*, edited by Newell S. Booth (New York: Nok Publishers, 1977, 275-293.

<sup>49</sup> Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 73.

context in Africa. Welbourn was surprised that "the outpouring of the Spirit which occurred in Kaimoisi in 1927, came not directly from institutional Pentecostalism but from the much more austere background of Friends Africa Mission."<sup>50</sup> We do recognize here, however, that the latter was a product of the nineteenth century holiness influence on Quakerism. For Welbourn, whose analysis seems to lack an historical awareness of the kinship between Holiness and Pentecostal movements, Arthur Chilson's revival preaching with its emphasis on receiving the Holy Spirit seems to have influenced the emergence of ecstatic experiences among the Africans.<sup>51</sup>

"Fellowship" and "unity", so characteristic of the holiness revivals, soon was broken. As Rasmussen mentions, "the issue that was to cause the disunity was the very same spiritual experience that missionaries and African Christians had been seeking for years." Kefa Mavuru, a former High Priest of the African Church of the Holy Spirit attests that Arthur Chilson's "Pentecost" revivals were decisive for the beginning of "the Holy Spirit Churches" among the Luhiyas of western Kenya. As was the case in South Africa with the formation of *Unzondelelo* (Native Home Missions (sic), the forerunner of Ethiopianism in South Africa), so the Spirit Churches in western Kenya were formed within the context of the Native Prayer Conference in 1927. The missionaries were wary of the movement turning into a "wild-fire" because of lack of supervision since at this time the natives could "not carry on the work alone." But supervision precipitated a number of separatist prayer cells. Jefferson Ford attempted to reconcile the groups but the eventual result was that most of those who remained were those with better "educational and social stratification." Although each group emphasized different aspects of the doctrine of holiness, it is clear that this polarization hid the fact that there were theological continuities between the Holy Spirit Churches and that of the mother Quaker Church. "Ezekiel Kasiera confirms that the evangelical theology preached by the Quaker missionaries, and especially that preached by Arthur Chilson, was not very different from the message of the Pentecostal missionaries at the neighboring Nyangori mission station."<sup>52</sup>

#### 4.3 *The Holiness Movement in West Africa*

The trends observable in East and Central Africa were also very prominent in the founding of a West African form of "spiritist churches," the Aladura Movement. Holiness revivals swept villages in western Africa

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<sup>50</sup> F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 73 ff and 74.

<sup>51</sup> Ane Marie Bak Rasmussen, *A History of the Quaker Movement in Africa* (New York: British Academic Press, 1995), 59.

<sup>52</sup> Rasmussen, *A History of the Quaker Movement in Africa*, 59-64.

that eventually led to the formation of the Aladura prayer groups.<sup>53</sup> Lamin Sanneh talks of "The Revival of 1930," which informed the theology of Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu and his Church of the Lord (Aladura). This revival was simultaneously a pronouncement of judgment on African idolatry and native medicines and the proclamation of a form of a four-fold gospel that "upheld faith healing and baptism of the Spirit, and taught about the gift of prophecy." What must be emphasized even more is the fact these ecclesiastical and missiological processes were catalyzed by the confluence of three major versions of holiness in the African context.<sup>54</sup>

Although the Aladura movement found its ultimate flowering in the 1930s, its rudiments were found in the holiness revivals of the late nineteenth century. Robert Wyllie's studies on Southern Ghana reveal that these new movements fit very well into the Methodist holiness context. They are at best "lineal descendants of mission Christianity which employ a particular interpretation of the Christian faith." Wyllie argues that Wesleyan Methodists were the dominant mission of the region in question and they offered a "doctrine of grace and sanctification." In order for what has been described as "efforts of early converts to operationalize Methodism," to offer *Ji* spiritual power, Methodism was "scanned" for its potential. Thus many of the early "spiritist prophets ... had been catechists or members in the Methodist mission."<sup>55</sup> A renowned African Ghanaian scholar, Kofi Appiah-Kubi, points out that "for these Indigenous African Christian churches Jesus Christ remains the supreme object of devotion. He is the Savior, the Baptizer in the Spirit, the Soon-Coming-King, and the Healer."<sup>56</sup> The evidence for revivalist theological themes is so overwhelming that even a casual look at the names of the spiritist/zionist churches in Africa reveals a pattern of their theology that is parallel to the radical developments in the American holiness movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

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<sup>53</sup> C. O. Oshun has argued that Aladura was a Christian revival movement in "Aladura Presence and Revivals in a Colonial Situation: A Conflict Model in Mission," in *African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1988), 197-219.

<sup>54</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1983), 185-186. The founder of the Christ Apostolic Church, Isaac Akinyele, saw the Great Revivals of 1930s to 1950s as "unmistakable signs of God's blessing"; See "Ayokundu Ogumati, Pastor and Politician: Isaac Akinyele, Olubadan of Ibadan (1862-1955)," in *Varieties of Christian Experiences in Nigeria*, ed. Elizabeth Isichei (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 134-135.

<sup>55</sup> Robert W. Wyllie, *The Spirit-Seekers: New Religious Movements in Southern Ghana* (Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1980), 5.

<sup>56</sup> See Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "Indigenous African Churches: Signs of Authenticity," in *African Theology En Route: Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, December 17-23, 1977, Accra Ghana*, eds. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (New York: Orbis Books, 1979), 117-121.

century. AICs such as *Life Salvation Church*, *Christian Holiness Church*, *Divine Healer Church* reveal the striking prominence of the themes of salvation, sanctification, and healing, though these are sometimes expressed in deeply African terms. Furthermore, several AICs added "the New Jerusalem," or "Zion" to their names as in *The New Jerusalem Apostolic Church in Zion*. This shows a great anticipation of the eschaton or the second coming of Christ with the establishment of "the New Jerusalem" in "Zion."

The West African Aladura Movement was not the exclusive result of the Wesleyans. Keswick holiness was at the wellspring of the African Church Movement in Yorubaland, Nigeria. But when the Keswick 'Missioners' arrived in Lagos and Freetown in 1886, 1888 and 1889, they found circumstances that were different from those in the British Isles and they "were surprised to find that they were not confronted with the lapsed masses as in England." Nigerian Christianity, however, had its own problems as defined by the missionaries. Outside Holy Johnson's parish, the missionaries found what they understood as unattended "habitual sinning among the Africans."<sup>57</sup> The revival message thus needed to be re-articulated in the new context, a process that did not always sit well with the high church missionaries within the Anglican mission. Webster's thesis recognized the central role of Keswick holiness in the emergence of the African Church Movement, to the extent that he concluded his study with these words: "the African Church Movement was the result of the positive impulse generated by the revival movement of the 1880s in Lagos." If, however, his overstatement of the connection between Keswick revivalism with shifting missionary policies to the effect that the "Keswick revival produced a generation of missionaries willing to use moral reasons to deny black leadership, and supporting imperial expansion as a means to the evangelization of Africa" is taken seriously, it could lead to the premature conclusion that the African Church Movement rejected holiness as an imperialist doctrine.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.4 The Holiness Movement in Southern Africa

It is also in this sense perhaps that the *Mai Chaza Church* in Zimbabwe should be understood. The emphasis on the "new messiah" in the person of the founder, Mai Chaza, as taking the place of Christ, as in a number of AICs, is an overstatement in this case.<sup>59</sup> It seems inconsistent that the Mai Chaza

<sup>57</sup> E. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* (New York: Humanities Press, 1966), 175-187. Holy Johnson is interpreted as a reformer and not a revolutionary within Anglican Church structures and also described as "fervent, puritanical figure, a zealous reformer" in J. F. Ade Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria (1841-1891): The Making of a New Elite* (London: Longmans, 1965), 235.

<sup>58</sup> James Bertin Webster, *The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 191, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Marie-Louise Martin, "The Mai Chaza in Rhodesia" in *African Initiatives in Religion*,

movement, which began within Methodism in Rhodesia as “a great movement strongly oriented toward combating heathen practices” such as those associated with ancestor veneration and traditional medicines would replace Christ with a human messiah. It would also seem inconsistent that, like the holiness missionary churches, the movement that used a Methodist hymn book and hoped to “carry out ... preaching and healing within the framework of the Methodist Church,” emphasizing abstention from strong drinks and tobacco, and enforcing monogamous marriages, would be interpreted as holding onto African traditional practices. The genius and at the same time the trouble of the Mai Chaza movement is in the synthesis of African sacral traditional kingship with the Old Testament notion of God’s holiness and the messianic concept of the New Testament. Also in a region that had few modern medical facilities, articulation of the use of biblical healing within a Bantu philosophical framework where all diseases were seen to have spiritual causes is an indication of great ingenuity.<sup>60</sup>

In order to demonstrate the emergence of revivalism as a crucial theological framework for the AICs, we will use the example of the spiritual journey of Petrus le Roux, a white Dutch Reformed Church missionary to the Zulus who (quite unexpectedly and in a way that defies our traditional understanding of “Zionism” in South Africa as an African initiative) established the first Zion in South Africa. I am fully aware of the danger of appearing to de-emphasize African initiative, but it is my argument that this is the only way we can begin to understand the theology of the AICs.<sup>61</sup>

Bengt Sundkler, a Swedish Lutheran missionary bishop in Africa, stated that between 1885 and 1915 most of the missions that went to South Africa “were the outcome of radical revivals in Europe and America of the ‘Holiness’ Pentecostal and Apostolic Faith type.” The South Africa General Mission, under the patronage of Andrew Murray, was a Keswick holiness mission that organized the Dumisa Training Institute. Several Zulus who later became “Separatist Church” leaders received their initial theological training at Dumisa.<sup>62</sup> “Zionism”, a term that has taken on an Africanist connotation, was perhaps taken from holiness mountain top experiences. Like a number of other “primitivist” terminologies that coloured the nomenclature of the AICs,

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ed. David Barrett (Nairobi, Kenya: East Africa Publishing House, 1971), 109-110.

<sup>60</sup> Martin, “The Mai Chaza in Rhodesia,” 112-117.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Ward once argued that the East African Revival was an African initiative “within the pattern of Evangelical Awakenings which have been a feature of European and American Protestantism since the 18th Century. See “*Tukutendereza Yesu*, The Balokole Revival in Uganda” in Zablon Nthamburi, ed., *From Mission to Church: A Handbook of Christianity in East Africa*, (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991), 113.

<sup>62</sup> Bengt G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, (2nd edition, London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 28.

"Zionism," must be disconnected from the prevailing African chauvinist historiography which views it as advocating African pagan practices.<sup>63</sup>

Sundkler himself talks of "a bewildering preponderance of churches calling themselves "Zion," "Jerusalem," "Apostolic," "Full Gospel" and "Pentecostal."<sup>64</sup> Though Sundkler tends to unnecessarily tilt towards an Africanist interpretation of the Zionists, he also commented, "obviously the pattern of Protestant revival meetings shows through in some of the [Zionist] services here described." But for him the Zionist churches were just wading "through the ashes resulting from such [revival] fire."<sup>65</sup> In other words they did not represent "real revival." Sundkler has since ameliorated his earlier stance and moved toward placing Zionist origins within the holiness revivals. This change was clear in his convincing argument which describes the first Zion in South Africa as the interracial "movement of the Spirit" following the Boer war at Wakkerstroom (Rapid Stream) in the Transvaal. In order to do that, he vividly described the "metamorphosis" of Petrus Louis le Roux from a Dutch Reformed minister through "Zionism," to the presidency of the Apostolic Faith Mission as a crucial turning point in South African church history.

Bengt Sundkler tells us that Le Roux met Andrew Murray, a man Sundkler describes as having "infused a spirit of revival into the Dutch Reformed Church," at Wellington Missionary College, South Africa. It was there that "Le Roux became one of his [Murray's] fervent disciples,<sup>66</sup> studying his many books with their holiness-Keswick message." Murray introduced Le Roux to a number of western holiness and healing propagators such as William Boardman. Le Roux's further theological development involved immersion in Pentecostal literature such as the pamphlet, *Divine Healing* by William Boardman, and Alexander Dowie's series, *Leaves of Healing* from Zion City, Illinois. Le Roux imbibed Dowie's "theocratic message with its four-fold Gospel of Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Healer and the Coming King." It was these teachings that created the theological tension between Le Roux and the DRC that later led to his resignation as a missionary of the church.

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<sup>63</sup> The appearance of the name within the holiness movement took prominence as Pentecostal language began to emerge within the revivals. For instance in the United States the paper *Tennessee Methodist*, managed by B. F. Haynes, in 1891 changed its name to *Zion's Outlook* when the Methodists withdrew their support because of his emphasis on a controversial teaching of holiness. The Pentecostal Alliance that supported this paper finally joined *the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene*. See *Holiness Organized or Unorganized? A History of the Pentecostal Mission, Inc. 1898-1915* (Nashville: Trevecca Press, 1977), 29.

<sup>64</sup> Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, 47-48.

<sup>65</sup> Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets*, 242-243.

<sup>66</sup> David J. Du Plessis has argued that Andrew Murray's ministry had made an indelible impression upon him. *The Spirit Bade Me Go: The Astounding Move of God in Denominational Churches* (Plainfield: Logos International), 56-57.

Upon his resignation, Petrus le Roux joined with Johannes Buchler (a Congregationalist minister who embraced Dowie's fourfold gospel), Edgar Mahon (a former holiness Salvation Army officer), and Dowie's emissary, Daniel Bryant, to become the organizing forces behind "the Zulu Zion." Upon the arrival of classical Pentecostalism, espoused especially through John G. Lake,<sup>67</sup> Le Roux moved from Zionism to Pentecostalism in a process that was sparked by racial preference and a search for respectability. He later became a leading figure in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). But out of Le Roux's Wakkerstroom's Zionist vision grew key African Zionists. It is my contention here, that whether one follows Alexander Dowie's or Andrew Murray's influence on Petrus le Roux, and hence on the first South African Zion, the end result indicates historical and theological kinship among these seemingly contradictory trajectories. Thus Sundkler's conclusion, though overstated to de-emphasize the African and stress white initiative in Zionism, is right in principle in that "the beginnings of Black Zion were not as exclusively African as one might presume."<sup>68</sup>

### Conclusion

There is a scandal in African Christian historiography that has blinded the eyes of church historians and theologians towards a pietistic/holiness reading of African Christianity. In and of itself a holiness reading of African Christianity provides the most comprehensive framework for understanding mainline-evangelical-pentecostal-charismatic Christianities. This research argues that the doctrine and the experience of holiness is central to understanding the process that has brought African Christianity to where it is today. This research sketches the challenges that face a study of the doctrine of holiness as a theological framework for understanding the emergence of Christianity in Africa. It also proposes the tenacity of a holiness/revivalist reading of African Protestant Christianity. I have, therefore, argued in this paper that our study of African Christian experience must take into account its holiness theological character: both missionary and nationalist. One cannot fully understand the emergence of evangelical missionary Christianity in Africa as well as prophet-healing Aladura churches in West Africa, Spirit Churches of East Africa, Zionists in Southern Africa and Prophet movements in Central Africa in their historic and contemporary expressions of Christianity without also understanding their roots in protest within the holiness movement.

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<sup>67</sup> For revivals in South Africa under John G. Lake see Cathy Crompton, *God in Action: Revival in South Africa* (Port Elizabeth, South Africa: Crompton Ministries, 1993).

<sup>68</sup> Bengt Sundkler, *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 13-67.

# Biblical View of Results: Purpose Driven Mission

Paul Mumo Kisau

## Introduction

The theme, 'Christian communities in contemporary contexts,' from Edinburgh 2010, is very interesting and one that brings in new thinking for biblical studies. This paper will focus on the sub theme of 'purpose driven mission' as a tool for the church in Africa and elsewhere today. The concept of results has been largely left to the business world and most recently the NGO world has joined in due to demands by the donor community for accountability. However, as we reflect on lessons learnt since the 1910 Edinburgh conference, as we understand how we are to do missions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we find that the African church, in its core business of missions, has not been consistently purpose driven – asking for tangible results. The definition of 'results': the effects or consequences of an action.

The research will address five basic questions. 1) What role did results play in Jesus' and the apostles' thinking and practice? 2) What results did the apostles hope to accomplish? 3) How did they know when they got the results they wanted? 4) What did they do when the results did not match their expectations? 5) What did they do when they got what they wanted?

This article will probe Paul's epistle to the Philippians using the five basic research questions and hopefully bring out what might be termed 'a biblical view of results' that would propel a purpose driven mission agenda. The appropriateness of the epistle to the Philippians for such a study is based on the fact that the apostle Paul wrote it after his mission at Philippi and therefore the letter will reflect either negative or positive results of such a mission. The epistle to the Philippians cannot provide all the details of Paul's mission in Philippi since its intention is not to provide historical data. Therefore to supplement it the narrative in the book of Acts will be consulted.

It is useful to mention some working presuppositions at this point. This paper presupposes that the apostle Paul authored the epistle to the Philippians and that one of the purposes for its authorship was to provide an appraisal of his mission at Philippi.<sup>1</sup> Also it is assumed that this epistle is written to a church at

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<sup>1</sup> See the following commentaries for introductory discussions: Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983); Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Moisés Silva, *Philippians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).



Philippi, a city mentioned in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>2</sup> The believers addressed are, therefore, the same ones that Paul had ministered to during his second (Acts 16:6-40) and third (Acts 20:1-6) missionary journeys.

### **The Church at Philippi: Historical Sketch (Acts 16:6-40; 20:1-2; 20:3-6)**

This historical sketch will trace the movement of Paul and his missionary team at Philippi during his second and third missionary journeys. Such a sketch is important if we are going to establish the results implied in the Philippians epistle, since it is in the narrative of Acts that we discover what was really done at Philippi.

### **The First Ministry at Philippi – Acts 16:6-40**

The visit of Paul and his team at Philippi receives much more space in the second missionary journey account than that of any other city, even though the visit itself seems to be very brief. The narrator of Acts may have had a vested interest here, since he seems to be an eyewitness. The 'we' passages stop at Philippi and then resume during the second visit there (20:1-15). This extensive attention is very helpful for our quest, since we are able to trace in rather minute detail the ministry of Paul at Philippi.

There are seven events that we will recount in an attempt to capture the thinking and actions of Paul that produce the results we see in Philippians.

1. The Macedonian Call – Acts 16:6-12
2. The Conversion of Lydia – Acts 16:13-15
3. The Encounter with a Slave-girl – Acts 16:16-18
4. The Philippian Imprisonment – Acts 16:19-28
5. The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer – Acts 16:29-34
6. The Release from Prison – Acts 16:35-39
7. The Departure from Philippi – Acts 16:40

### **1. The Macedonian Call – Acts 16:6-12**

The narrative leading to the Macedonian call begins with the missionaries being forbidden to preach the word of God in Asia. The narrator does not say why the Holy Spirit forbade them from speaking the word in Asia, but this may have paved the way for the Philippian visit. Although the mode the Holy Spirit used in communicating this directive is not given, we may assume that Silas had a part to play in it, since he was a prophet (Acts 15:32).<sup>3</sup> Paul and his team were not on their own, God played an important role in their mission.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Philippi will be discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts, Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 253.

Now that God had clearly forbidden them from preaching in Asia, Paul and his team attempted to enter Bithynia. Once again God, this time through the Spirit of Jesus, did not permit them to go there either (Acts 16:7).

One thing that stands out in these two prohibitions is that there was a clear communication between Paul and God, so that God closely monitored where Paul went and what he did. One might conclude at this early stage that Paul's thinking was constantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus the results of his actions are tied to God's will. The challenge that proceeds from such thinking is this: who is responsible for the results, God or Paul? The answer to this question will become clear in the discussion of the Philippian epistle.

Not knowing where God wanted them to go next, the team decided to go to the city port of Troas via Mysia (Acts 16:8). Up until this point, the narrative is in the third person, and even the events of the Macedonian vision are described in the third person. The narrator changes to the first person plural for the first time in the narrative of Acts after Paul saw the vision (Acts 16:10), which strongly suggests that the narrator had now joined the missionary team at Troas. Scholars suggest that Luke, who is assumed to have been a resident of Philippi, had met the missionary team at Troas, and consequently had briefed them concerning the state of Macedonia and the need to evangelise that part of the world.<sup>4</sup> This assumption does help to explain how Paul was able to recognise the man who appeared to him in vision as being a Macedonian. After the vision Paul and his team were able to determine that God now wanted them to move on to Macedonia: '*God had called us to preach the gospel to them*'. This was an important turning point in the history of missions, where by God's guidance, Paul's thinking and actions were now directed to Europe for evangelization<sup>5</sup> – going to where the need was greatest at the time. Longenecker's conclusion here captures the lesson well: "Christian response to the call of God is never a trivial thing. Indeed, as in this instance, great issues and untold blessings may depend on it."<sup>6</sup>

After their decision to move on to Macedonia, they aimed at the important city of the province as it is recorded: '*to Philippi, which is a leading city of Macedonia*.'<sup>7</sup> The city of Philippi was built and fortified in 358 – 357 B.C. by

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<sup>4</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 254. The link of Luke to the Macedonian vision suggests strongly that God uses human agency in communicating His will. People are, therefore, important in linking others to opportunities that are divinely arranged.

<sup>5</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 254: "Authentic turning points in history are few. But surely among them that of the Macedonian vision ranks high. Because of Paul's obedience at this point, the gospel went westward; and ultimately Europe and the Western world were evangelized."

<sup>6</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 254.

<sup>7</sup> There is a translation debate, since it is not clear what ἡ τις ἐστὶν πρώτη[ς] μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας πόλις "to Philippi, which is a leading city of Macedonia" exactly means.

Philip II of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great.<sup>8</sup> The city was located strategically near the sea, about ten miles from the port city of Neapolis, and in fertile plains, bounded by mountains and two rivers on each side. It was important for agriculture, gold mining and commerce. Its accessibility either by sea or by land on the Via Egnatia<sup>9</sup> made it a natural place for missionary activity.

On the religious front, by the time Paul and his team came to the city, it was rather syncretistic, with various deities, but the imperial cult was dominant.<sup>10</sup> This justifies why the man of Macedonia called for the help of the missionaries, since the climate was fertile for the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

The choice of the city by Paul and his team may have been influenced by the thinking that if Macedonia was to be evangelized, then the leading city of the province was the best place to speak the word of God. This would enable the missionaries to maximise the results of their mission work. The call by God had been to Macedonia, but the responsibility of finding the most suitable place for ministry was left for the missionaries to decide.

## 2. The Conversion of Lydia – Acts 16:13-15

On the Sabbath, Paul and his team went to the riverside to find a place of prayer. Perhaps, since they had been in the city for several days, they had been informed of this as a place of prayer. This follows Paul's usual ministry method,<sup>12</sup> where he always began preaching in the place of worship – explaining the good news to those who were already familiar with the worship of God.<sup>13</sup> The description of Lydia in Acts 16:14, where we are told that she was a worshipper of God, concurs with this suggestion. Why go to a place where people were already worshippers of God? Why not conduct an open-air evangelistic crusade? What role did results play in Paul's thinking and ministry style? A simple answer is that Paul went to those who already had an idea of the worship of God in order to maximize the ministry results.

God, who had directed the missionaries to Macedonia, also facilitated the conversion of Lydia: '*the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul*' (Acts 16:14). The Lord who had forbidden the missionaries from speaking the word in Asia now confirmed that He had called them to Macedonia

See two different translations of this phrase in Acts 16:12 as represented by the NIV and GNB.

<sup>8</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, xxxiii.

<sup>9</sup> For further details see O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the revelation by the possessed slave-girl that Paul and his team were servants of the most high God and had brought the message of the way of salvation (Acts 16:17).

<sup>12</sup> O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Where a city did not have enough men to form a quorum for a Jewish synagogue, worship would be conducted outside the city, most probably beside a river. See the commentaries on Acts for a fuller discussion on this.

by converting Lydia and her entire household to the new teaching. Again, the conversion of Lydia seems to be providential since she is a business woman of Thyatira and would therefore share her faith as she went about her business beyond the city of Philippi.

The plea of Lydia to the missionaries that they enter her home and stay seems to suggest they needed a place to stay, which she was willing to provide: *“And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us”* (Acts 16:15). Lydia’s plea indicates a positive result for the ministry of Paul and his team of missionaries. It is an indicator as to whether their ministry had been successful. The decision to stay in Lydia’s house indicates that they believed her conversion was genuine.

### **3. A Slave-girl Possessed by an Evil Spirit – Acts 16:16-18**

The evil spirit in the girl made what seems like a wonderful revelation to her owners as she followed the missionaries: *‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved’* (Acts 16:17). This she did for many days, but there are no recorded converts<sup>14</sup> as a result of her revelation – the evil spirit was not speaking for the sake of conversion but confusion. Paul, therefore, being troubled by these continued utterances, commanded the evil spirit to come out of the girl in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:18). The formula of exorcism seems to follow the same pattern followed by Peter and John in the healing of the crippled beggar at the temple gates (Acts 3:6). The order of words in the original are: *‘I command you in [the] name of Jesus Christ to come out of her’* (my translation). The command is, therefore, given on the basis of the name of Jesus Christ – the name of Jesus Christ is not used here as an instrument hence the English translation, ‘in [the] name’. Paul, therefore, invokes the authority of Jesus Christ in driving out the evil spirit (cf. Matt 28:18).

The results were immediate – *‘at that moment the spirit left her’* (16:18). This meant that the girl could no longer give divinations and most probably she was included in the community of believers, judging by the wrath of her masters.

### **4. The Philippian Imprisonment – Acts 16:19-28**

This was an unplanned event, although it was always a possibility as Paul was very aware of the dangers of preaching the gospel. The imprisonment was a result of exorcising the spirit of divination from the slave girl (Acts 16:16-18). This otherwise benevolent action led Paul into deep trouble, since the slave

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<sup>14</sup> It has been suggested that the Philippian jailer must have heard the message of the girl, since he was able to ask Paul and Silas what he needed to do in order to be saved (Acts 16:30). The endeavours by the evil spirit in the slave-girl to preach might be similar to what Paul intimates in his letter to the Philippians - that some were preaching Jesus in order to harm him (Philippians 1:15, 17-18).

girl's masters benefited from her otherwise sorry situation.<sup>15</sup> They now stood to lose money, since the slave girl had brought them profit through the spirit of divination (Acts 16:19). Seeing Paul and Silas as the source of their poverty, they trumped up charges against them before the chief magistrates. '*These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice*' (Acts 16:20-21).

The chief magistrates did not give Paul and Silas an opportunity to tell their side of the story as we learn later, but went on to pass judgment. They were flogged and put in prison under high security (Acts 16:22).

### 5. The Conversion of the Philippian Jailer – Acts 16:29-34

Although at face value this was a punishment to imprison Paul and Silas, they took it positively and used the occasion to pray and to sing praises to their God. They chose the quiet of the night as the right time to worship their master – '*about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening*' (16:25). Even at this late hour, the narrator tells us that the other prisoners were listening – we are not told the content of the prayer, but one can assume that it had something to do with the gospel.

The Lord came to their rescue (16:26), but not as quietly as he had done in the case of Peter (12:5-11). All the prisoners' chains fell off and the doors were opened (16:26). Perhaps this speaks of how the Lord was determined to let loose men and women imprisoned by sin (cf. Luke 4:18-19).

The jailer's first reaction was to prepare to kill himself, perhaps because the jailers in Peter's case were all executed. If the jailer feared the same fate, one wonders why he wanted to execute himself (16:27).<sup>16</sup>

Paul was alert and came to the jailer's rescue. Paul and Silas did not run away, neither did they allow the other prisoners to escape. What became of these prisoners we are not told, since the jailer's story now takes centre stage. The jailer addresses Paul and Silas as his superiors (16:28-30). He fell face down at the missionaries' feet to plead for mercy, because he had become aware of the higher authority of the God whom these men served. '*What must I do to be saved?*' was his desperate cry (16:30). The response is very short and precise. '*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household*' (16:31). Salvation had come to the jailer and his whole household (16:31-34). What seemed to be an evil deed done to the missionaries resulted in

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<sup>15</sup> Those who try to improve the lives of the oppressed may be seen as enemies, as in this story. Sometimes the sorry state of the weak carries with it economic benefit for others. As we attempt to create change, those who benefit from the status quo will find this an unwelcome intrusion.

<sup>16</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC, (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 272, suggests no rational explanation is possible, and that the jailer may have lost his senses during the incident.

a plentiful harvest. The jailer and his household were baptised that very night (16:33) and shared a meal with Paul and Silas (16:34).

## **6. The Release from Prison – Acts 16:35-39**

Paul and Silas stood their ground when the authorities sought to release them privately, even though they had disgraced them in public. They demanded an apology from the appropriate authorities before they would depart. Their rights as citizens could not be compromised simply because they were missionaries (16:35-39). Paul's statement is very telling: *'They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out'* (16:37). The magistrates were forced to come to Paul and Silas and make peace with them (16:39).

### *1.7 The Departure from Philippi – Acts 16:40*

The narrator tells us that Paul and Silas, after their release from prison, went to Lydia's house where they encouraged the brethren (Acts 16:40). The brief ministry at Philippi had gathered together a group of Christians, now referred to as 'brethren' – men and women believers. Interestingly, Lydia's house became a 'house church'. On their departure, Paul and Silas seem to have left behind Luke and Timothy to tend the church.

Two other stopovers in Philippi are given very little space in Acts (Acts 20:1-6). There is no need to discuss them here, but it is prudent to mention that Paul had a continued link with the Philippian church.

## **A Biblical View of Results**

### **1. The Philippian Epistle and a Biblical View of Results**

The Philippian epistle has rightly been described as the most personal letter among all the Pauline epistles. In it Paul expresses his deeply felt joy<sup>17</sup> in every remembrance of the Philippian believers (1:3-4). Paul explains why he thanks God and is filled with joy as he remembers the Philippian believers - they have continued to share in the work of the gospel, even to the time of writing (1:5).

#### *1.1 The Results That Paul Had Hoped to Accomplish at Philippi*

In the opening chapter of Philippians, Paul expresses confidence that *'the one having begun a good work in/among you will bring it to completion/perfection until/at the day of Christ Jesus'* (1:6). The question to raise here is, what work had begun among the Philippians? And who is referred to by the participle *'the one having begun'*? It is most likely that Paul was thinking of God and remembering the way in which the missionary work in Macedonia was directed by divine guidance (Acts 16:6-10). From these opening words by Paul and the narrative of the Macedonian ministry in Acts 16:6-40, we conclude that

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<sup>17</sup> The terms depicting 'joy' in the epistle to the Philippians occur numerous times: 'joy' – 5 times; 'glad' – 2 times; and 'rejoice' – 7 times (based on the Greek text).

Paul hoped to accomplish a certain work, referred to here as 'a good work' among the Philippians.

Put in another way, the missionaries had decided, following the Macedonian vision, that God had called them to preach the word to the Macedonians (Acts 16:10). The result of such preaching amounted to what the Macedonian man had called 'help' in his plea to Paul; 'Come over to Macedonia and help us' (Acts 16:9). It is important to understand what Paul interpreted this 'help' to mean, so that he could know when 'help' had been delivered.

As noted above, the term 'help' to the missionaries meant 'to preach the gospel to them' (Acts 16:10). But preaching the gospel presupposes that the recipients of the gospel had an obligation to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (Acts 16:31). After the act of believing, the converts were to join a Christian group for mutual support (2:1ff. cf. Acts 16:40).

That Paul also expected the Philippians to grow in their Christian life is evidenced in his prayer for them (1:9-11). The content of this prayer summarizes the results of the certain work – Paul's ministry among the Philippians and God's continued work among them.<sup>18</sup> The first of these was their love, which must not stop with them, but should overflow to others (1:9). This love is to be accompanied by full knowledge and moral insight, by which they are to discern God's plan for their present life (1:10) – the ability to know what really matters.<sup>19</sup> The ultimate result that Paul sought here was their blameless state<sup>20</sup> at the day of Christ Jesus for the praise and glory of God (1:11).<sup>21</sup>

### 1.2 The Indicators Used to Measure the Results

The question that we must deal with is this: How did Paul know when he got the results he wanted? For him to know when he got the results that he wanted there must have been some means of measurement - indicators for measuring the results.

The first convert of the Philippian missionary endeavour, Lydia, provides the clue to one such indicator. In her case God opened her heart to believe the message that was being preached by Paul (Acts 16:14). The first indicator, therefore, was the evidence of genuine faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 16:31-33).

The second indicator is that such a faith had to be backed with acts of righteousness (1:11) as evidenced in the two cases narrated in Acts 16: Lydia in

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<sup>18</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 96.

<sup>19</sup> Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 96, 101-103.

<sup>20</sup> This was always the ultimate purpose for Paul as he went about preaching the gospel: to present everyone to Christ complete/perfect (cf. Col 1:28-29).

<sup>21</sup> See Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 96, for a seven item summary of Paul's prayer.

Acts 16:15 and the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:34. Both Lydia and the Philippian jailer invited the missionaries to their homes for further fellowship.

The third indicator is that those who helped were ready to help others, that is, they were to share with Paul in the gospel ministry (1:5).

The fourth indicator is evidence of Christian maturity, growth in faith (1:27).

The fifth indicator is a willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ (1:29-30).

The sixth indicator is unity of purpose among the believers, oneness (1:9; 1:27; 2:1-4; cf. Jesus' prayer for unity among his disciples, John 17:20-23).

There must be a way to observe these indicators at work. Paul wanted to be physically present to experience the results, evidenced by his longing to visit the Philippians (1:8). But there are two ways of measuring the results, by personal visit and/or a reliable report (1:27). If Paul was to know whether his ministry had been successful according to the indicators outlined above, he could personally visit the Philippians (1:26, 27; 2:24). Since that was not possible because he was in prison, he decided to send someone to gather the report for him, in this case Timothy (2:19; cf. Acts 19:22). The messenger had to be someone that both the sender and the recipients trusted. This two-way trust can be seen in Paul's commendation of Timothy (2:20-23). Although Paul could have sent Epaphroditus to gather the report, he decided to send him back home not to compile a report, but to relieve the believers at Philippi of their anxiety concerning their messenger (2:25-30).

## **2. Paul's Response When Results Matched the Expectations**

It does not need a specialist to discover that Paul was happy with the Philippian ministry. We may safely conclude that to Paul, the Philippian ministry was 'mission accomplished'. The Philippians had participated in the gospel from the beginning until now (1:5) and some of the Philippian women had been instrumental in the propagation of the gospel, since they had partnered with Paul in the work of the gospel (4:3; cf. Acts 16:15).

As can be detected from the Philippian epistle, Paul wrote to encourage the believers because they had met the criteria for Christian maturity. Indeed, he states without reservation that he always thanked God as he prayed for them with joy (1:3-5). Paul saw clear evidence of genuine faith among the believers at Philippi (1:6; cf. Acts 16:14-15, 31-34).

They had also participated in providing for his needs in the mission field, not only while at Philippi, but even beyond - for example at Thessalonica (4:15-16). The Philippians had been willing to provide for Paul on other occasions even though they didn't always have an opportunity to do so (4:10). Their endeavours to partner with Paul moved them to send Epaphroditus to him with provisions, for which he writes to express his gratitude (4:18). This concern and action proved beyond any reasonable doubt that Paul's ministry had produced the



desired results and in his letter Paul acknowledges this before God and to them. What they did was accepted in heaven and Paul blessed them (4:18-19).

### 3. Paul's Response When Results Did Not Match Expectations

The Philippian epistle does not reveal much concerning any results that did not match Paul's expectations. Even when he turns up the heat in the letter it is towards some perceived opponents.<sup>22</sup> Space does not allow us to go into a long debate concerning the identity of the opponents. The mention of the opponents comes in a report concerning Paul's situation at the time of writing (1:12). These opponents were not among the Philippian believers, but could be Paul's opponents finding their way to Philippi or perhaps the Philippians had their own opponents (1:28). We should not conclude, therefore, that the Philippians failed to stand up to their opponents. It is our submission that what is included here concerning the Philippians is for their encouragement, rather than Paul accusing them of showing a lack of Christian maturity. The believers were to shun the false teachers (3:2) and instead follow Paul's example (3:17a) and other examples of good Christian character demonstrated by the missionaries (3:17b). Paul did not want to create an impression of a holier than thou attitude, but was willing to admit that he had not yet become all that he could be in Christ (3:13). And yet, he was pressing on and admonished his readers to follow on (3:14-16).

There are, however, negative results when Paul discusses unity. There were severe differences between some of the believers that caused Paul's joy to be incomplete (2:2). Even though the Philippians were close to Paul's heart (4:1), he could not fail to mention their weakness. That there was disunity among certain ladies was candidly stated (4:2). But he had the formula for solving the problem. He eloquently describes how the believers were to be united in Christ (2:1-4). This is followed closely by the example of humility displayed by Christ Jesus, though we do not have space to discuss in any detail the Christological hymn in 2:5-11. Finally, he returns to his earlier reference to unity (1:27) and strongly commands them to obey his instructions regarding unity (2:12-16).<sup>23</sup> If they hold fast to the word of life, then Paul will have a reason to boast as he parades them at the day of Christ Jesus because they represent all that he has done (2:16). The *'loyal partner'* is mandated to reconcile the two women who are singled out as having severe differences: Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3). These women had made a great impact in the ministry of the gospel along with Clement and the rest of Paul's co-workers (4:3).

Paul's response to negative results can be summarised in the word 'calmness'. He exemplified this attitude when he was thrown into prison at

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion on the debate on Paul's opponents see any of the commentaries listed in footnote #1 above.

<sup>23</sup> Although God was at work among them, they had a responsibility to work out their salvation in fear and trembling (2:12). See Silva, *Philippians*, 139, who rightly observes: "our activity is possible only because of divine grace".

Philippi as, with Silas, he prayed and sang hymns of praise to God. So too in the face of the disunity at Philippi, as he describes his opponents and talks about disunity among the Philippians, a calm spirit can be detected (4:5 - '*Let your gentleness be evident to all*'). The principle modelled here is that we are to face negative results with a positive attitude (4:6). This does not mean that Paul ignored the negative results. On the contrary, he faced them with the aim of either preventing further damage (3:17-19) or turning the situation around to bring positive results (2:1-4; 4:2-3).

## Summary and Conclusions

The discussion so far has yielded some useful fruit in our quest for a biblical view of results. It can be concluded that Paul's ministry at Philippi was divinely guided. The fact that Paul and his team could know that the Holy Spirit had forbidden them from preaching the word in Asia and that, after Paul's vision, they could conclude that God had called them to preach in Macedonia, proves beyond doubt that they sought God's guidance in their ministry.

Thus the first principle in a biblical view of results is **divine guidance**. If the process is to be termed biblical, then God must play an important role in directing the proposed project. This calls for prayer in any venture grounded in Christian principles. Since divine guidance is usually given through human agency, if needy people do not draw attention as to their state, it is difficult to know how to help. It is the submission of this paper that God will bring both parties, the ones in need and the help providers, to an awareness of His will on any matter. As it was in the case of the Macedonians where a man of Macedonia appeared to Paul in a vision calling for help, men and women in need will 'appear' to us in whatever way that God enables them to reach us. Real change will only be effected if those to be helped are aware of their need and are ready to participate in the process of change as we observed in the case of the two notable conversions at Philippi: Lydia and the jailer.

The second principle is **obedience**. Paul and company, after being sure that God's hand was directing them to Macedonia, obeyed without delay.

The third principle consists of **concrete plans with measurable goals**. The ultimate purpose was to preach the word of God to the Macedonians so that in turn they would be helped, both in their immediate life on earth and in the future in the presence of Christ Jesus. Paul's goal was to invest in change, whereby he made ordinary Philippians into citizens of heaven who are counted as worthy in this life. Consequently, he reminded the Philippians that their way of life counted both in the present and in the future.

The fourth principle that can be gleaned from the foregoing discussion is an **effective evaluative procedure**. That is, there must be a way of reporting the progress of the ministry. Firstly, there has to be clearly defined criteria for measuring the expected results. Secondly, some kind of personal involvement in

evaluating the indicators is paramount, since we are dealing with people and not machines. Thirdly, any third party must be credible to both parties. Paul did not want to impose a person that the Philippians did not trust and thereby hinder the openness that is required in measuring results, whether positive or negative. If there is no trust, then it becomes difficult to establish the reasons for any negative results. Insider reports, as important as they are, have to be backed by independent assessment. This may be the reason for sending Timothy (an outsider) with Epaphroditus (an insider).

The fifth principle is **to commend believers when results match the expectations**. The epistle of Paul to the Philippians is more or less a commendation letter. In it he expresses his thanks to God for the work that had been accomplished among the Philippians. He also commends them for their continued support in the work of the gospel where they are singled out as the only church that partnered with Paul in the ministry of giving and receiving.

The sixth principle is **to point out firmly, but gently, any negative results**. Paul pointed out the danger posed by those who *'live as enemies of the cross of Christ'* (3:18) and warned his readers of the fate of such people. *'Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things'* (3:19). On the contrary, the Philippian believers were citizens of heaven (3:20-21). And yet as citizens of heaven, the readers had shamefully allowed a spirit of division to exist in their midst. This disunity is firmly dealt with by Paul. He opens up the exhortation concerning the need for unity by praying for their love to abound more and more (1:9) before proceeding to firmly rebuke their disunity.<sup>24</sup>

The seventh principle: **The ultimate goal is to bring glory to God as the investment in people is paraded before Him on the day of Christ**. Although Paul sought to make his joy complete by urging the Philippians towards unity (2:2), his ultimate expectation was to stand proudly before Christ on account of their righteous lives.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the ultimate goal in seeking positive results is to bring glory to God.<sup>26</sup>

In summary, there are at least seven proposed principles in a biblical view of results found as a result of our study of Paul's ministry at Philippi:

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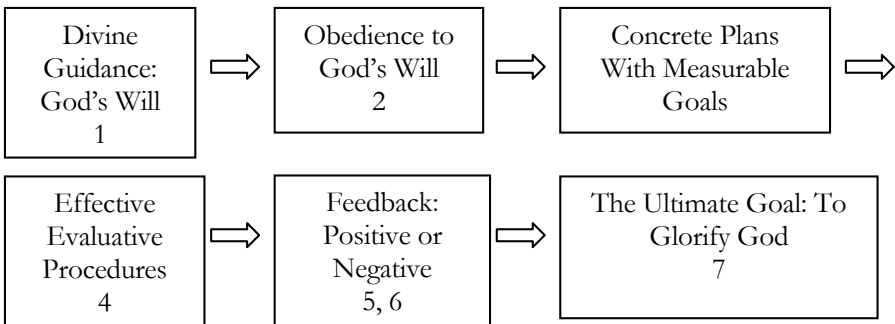
<sup>24</sup> So Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 26.

<sup>25</sup> *'It is by holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labour in vain.'* 2:16 (NRSV); cf. 1:27; 2:12-15.

<sup>26</sup> Silva, *Philippians*, 58.

1. Divine Guidance
2. Obedience to Divine Guidance
3. Concrete Plans With Measurable Goals
4. Effective Evaluative Procedures
5. Feedback: Commendation When Results Match Expectations
6. Feedback: Firm but Gentle When Results do not Match Expectations
7. The Ultimate Goal in Seeking Positive Results is to Glorify God

These seven proposed principles provide the following model of biblical view of results.



In conclusion, it is our humble submission that to seek for results is both biblical and desirable. The apostle Paul made it clear that he did not expect to toil for nothing (2:16). He wanted results that matched his expectations and worked hard to produce them in the Philippians. We cannot afford to expect less in any work that is associated with God, not least in missionary work.

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# Ghana Shall Be Saved: A Theological Reflection on Two Ghanaian Prayer-Songs

by Joseph Quayesi-Amakye

## Abstract

*This essay reflects on the symbiotic relations between the Ghanaian church and state. It examines two Ghanaian prayer-songs, namely, the National Anthem and a local Pentecostal song with the aim of distilling from them inherent theological ideas for developing a humane national consciousness. In this way the paper seeks to evaluate and formulate a Christian theology that responds to the Ghanaian search for meaning in the public space. Accordingly, the paper aims at challenging the Ghanaian church to appreciate its prophetic role in the realization of the Ghanaian dream of freedom and justice. This paper stresses the need for appreciating and taking advantage of the Ghanaian religiosity for the fulfillment of national aspirations.*

## Introduction

It is said that religion exerts a comprehensive influence on the thoughts and actions of the African person.<sup>1</sup> Religion plays a prominent role in Ghanaian life. It penetrates every facet of the Ghanaian life. Ghanaians fill their lives with God-talk that is often expressed through their songs and prayers. Both Ghanaian religious songs and prayers are rich reservoirs of the Ghanaian understanding, anticipation and interpretation of life. Hence the question we seek to answer in this paper is: Are there theological ideas inherent in Ghanaian prayer-songs that can be used to help Ghanaians realize the national dream of freedom and justice for a meaningful and fulfilling life?

For the Ghanaian, authentic religion necessarily means making sense out of life. It is a state and condition of ensuring that life moves from 'sacred' spaces into the 'profane' public life. This leads to a consideration of the Ghanaian perception and quest for meaning in this life as expressed through their prayer-songs. This also calls for a consideration of the role of religion in Ghanaian national life. These issues are significant in the sense that today we can still talk about a nation in conflict; a nation with various forms of disparity in its socio-economic, cultural and political fabric. For example, the gulf between the rich and the poor is still widening while there is every reason to believe nepotism and corruption reign supreme in Ghana's inter-personal relations. How should Christianity and Christian theology be transformational

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Co., 1996), 3.



in the face of these socio-economic and political imbalances? Are there tools available for developing a humanizing theology to offset the apparent imbalances in the Ghanaian society? We propose that one way of doing this is by examining Ghanaian socio-religious songs to see how Ghanaians express their fears, hopes and expectations, and then formulating a theology to deal with them. It is for this reason that we seek to examine and evaluate in this paper the theological ideas inherent in two Ghanaian prayer-songs for the realization of the Ghanaian dream of a better tomorrow.

### Theology and Ghanaian Prayer-Songs

Theology is “a disciplined reflection on the reality of God and God’s relation to the world, whose intention is to clarify God’s purposes and actions and, in this light, to evaluate the faith and practice of those who claim to know God.”<sup>2</sup> Significantly, apart from an academic and systematic approach, theology may also be constructed from people’s experiences with God expressed in their prayers, songs, liturgy, conversations, etc. In this kind of theology, or popular theology, the ‘embedded text’ may be decoded to unravel the text’s ‘otherness’.<sup>3</sup> This paper will seek to show that God’s sovereignty transcends and pervades the ecclesial and ‘secular’ spaces of Ghanaian life, and that there is a symbiotic relation between the church and society that must be exploited for national cohesion. It will achieve this by examining, evaluating and systematizing some theological ideas inherent in two Ghanaian prayer-songs: The National Anthem and a Pentecostal patriotic song entitled *Oman Ghanaba tow ahurusi ndwom* (Sing a joyful song, O citizen of Ghana).

As we shall see, these songs, one secular and the other religious, are nationalistic in tone and perspective. This present version of the Anthem uses the music of the original Anthem composed by Philip Gbeho adopted upon independence in 1957. The current lyrics that have been in use since the 1970s were written by a student, Michael Kwame Gbordzoe, within the framework of a national competition. The current text was chosen some time after the 1966 coup in Ghana.<sup>4</sup> The replacement of the old version with this new version apparently reflects the feelings of ‘new liberation’ that the nation had experienced. The nation had just emerged from the ‘dictatorial oppression’ of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?: Theological Explorations* (London: Darton Longmans and Todd, 1999), 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gary A. Phillips, “The Ethics of Reading Deconstructively, or Speaking Face to Face: The Samaritan Woman Meets Derrida at the Well” in Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 289.

<sup>4</sup> See Africanus Owusu Ansah, “All Die be Die”, *Daily Guide* (March 10, 2011), 20.

<sup>5</sup> For more the background see John S. Pobee, *Kwame Nkrumah and the Church in Ghana-1949-1966* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1988); Ebenezer Obiri Addo, *Kwame Nkrumah: A Case Study of Religion and Politics in Ghana* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1999).

On the other hand the religious song *Oman Ghanaba* was sung during the early days of national independence. It was composed by Pastor Anaman of the Ghana Apostolic Church (known today as Church of Pentecost). Pastor Anaman was very instrumental in the secession of James McKeown's Ghana Apostolic Church from the parent church, Bradford's Apostolic Church in 1953. During the ensuing conflict it was Pastor Anaman who was nominated as the chairman of the unity Ghanaian Apostolic church proposed by President Nkrumah's government.<sup>6</sup> It would seem Pastor Anaman was as nationalistic as he was religious, which would explain the lyrics of his song. For the purpose of this paper I have chosen to examine the first stanzas of both the Anthem and *Oman Ghanaba* because I consider those stanzas as sufficient to provide the raw data for this paper.

### **A Nation Cries to God: God *must* be Ghanaian**

There are a number of insights that reveal how Ghanaian religiosity is connected with secularity. There is no *conscious* separation between the religious and the secular as far as the Ghanaian is concerned. The Ghanaian longing for blessing is directed God-ward. God is the key factor in national and personal aspirations. This is what informs the lyrics of the National Anthem printed below:

God bless our homeland Ghana,  
And make our nation great and strong,  
Bold to defend forever  
The cause of Freedom and of Right.  
Fill our hearts with true humility  
Make us cherish fearless honesty,  
And help us to resist oppressor's rule  
With our will and might for evermore.

In this Anthem there are two main themes that call for our attention. They are the recognition of divine providence and the importance of individual and corporate responsibility in nation building. The song is a cry for the building of a sovereign, self-reliant nation whose greatness and strength lie in the selflessness of its citizens. In this song there is also recognition of the ubiquity of evil in the world. Here evil is conceived in terms of lack of freedom and privation of rights. Oppression and injustice are made possible through intimidation, fear and sycophancy. These social evils inhibit the development of a great and strong nation, the very aspiration of the new nation-state of Ghana. To negate this, Ghanaians must determinedly and boldly become personally responsible in defending the nation. This demands two positive

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<sup>6</sup> David Tenobi, *A Short History of the Apostolic Church in Ghana* (n.p., n.d), 22-23. See also Opoku Onyinah. "The Man James McKeown" in Opoku, Onyinah (ed.), *The Church of Pentecost: 50 Years of Sustainable Growth*; James McKeown Memorial Lectures (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2004), 68-69, and E.K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: CPCS, 2001), 212-213.

attitudes: humility of heart and fearless honesty. It means a willingness to be sacrificed on the altar of truth. This makes willing martyrdom consequential to a resistance to oppression.

Oppression thrives on dishonesty. Oppressors love to be praised. Their callousness is fueled by narcissistic sycophancy. Sycophants do not think about others but only about themselves alone. They love to tell their benefactors only what the latter love to hear: the oppressor is always right; he/she is loved and adored by all; the people are not worried by the wicked and obnoxious laws. Sycophants go to great lengths to gossip, malign, vilify, blackmail, undermine and betray others to achieve their selfish goals. Their attitudes, intentions, actions (covert or overt) and speeches affect not only their individual targets but also derail national development and prosperity. In Ghana, as in many parts of Africa, sycophancy has become an acceptable part of the social fabric.

Actually sycophancy undergirds “the sponsorship game”, a political tactic. In this game the individual attaches him/herself to his/her boss or someone with power. Typically individuals attach themselves to someone who is on the way to power. The sponsor is a power base. Some of the power of the sponsor tends to rub off on the sycophant or client. Some rules involved in this game are that the sycophant must:

1. show commitment and loyalty to the sponsor;
2. follow each sponsor-initiated request or order;
3. stay in the background and give the sponsor credit for everything and
4. be thankful and display gratitude to the sponsor.

The political sponsorship game underpins what Paul Gifford has noted about African politics, namely, neo-patrimonialism which thrives on clientelism.<sup>7</sup> It is that state of affairs where sycophancy ‘scratches the hands’ of sponsorship. It is a negative mutuality.

Interestingly, sycophancy can turn into betrayal especially when sponsorship fails to satisfy sycophants’ expectations. Ghanaian history is replete with this. Daily we see how sycophants and sponsors backstab each other and the consequences of this are always disastrous. For instance, President Nkrumah arrested his own ministers for being responsible for his near-death in the Kulungugu bomb attack. Ace Ghanaian journalist Kwesi Pratt’s hypercriticism of and hardened opposition to the New Patriotic Party (NPP) could best be interpreted against the plausible failure of the party to ‘scratch the back of his hand’ after its 2000 electoral victory. In recent times one Lucky Mensah’s song, *Uncle Tawiah, gye nkratoō yi* (Uncle Tawiah, get

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Ltd., 1998), 5-6. In neo-patrimonialism, the political sponsor or patron uses the powers of his public office for his own benefit and the benefit of his sycophants or clients who in turn give him their support.

this message) clearly displays his disappointment at President Atta Mills' government's failure to 'appease him' for helping them to win the 2008 elections. Lucky was one of the musicians whose songs were successfully appropriated by the then opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) in its electoral campaign against the NPP government.

Hence the national anthem poetically expresses aloud what all honest and patriotic Ghanaians fear and abhor - dishonesty that leads to oppression in Ghanaian society. Therefore like all patriots Gbordzoe disavows any form of oppression, injustice, and privation. This is important when we consider the role of the national anthem as an expression of the Ghanaian dream of freedom and justice. Freedom and justice are two disadvantaged and endangered species in African life. While injustice and oppression are global diseases, it is among Africans that they are most deadly. To correct their debilitating and terminal effects many sacrificed themselves to resist them. Some even chose the barrel of the gun to oppose dishonesty and oppression. However, after some five decades Africans have learnt the hard lesson that the revolutionary 'messiahs' are more self-seeking than their criminalized victims. Oppressed people in Africa today have used the methods of democratic elections and popular protests to fight for freedom and justice. In both methods, though, the hard truth is that some people sacrifice their blood because of the selfishness of those in power.

And yet Gbordzoe does not despair. He looks up to God as the source of the nation's deliverance. This is no fatalistic withdrawal from reality, nor is it evidence of passivity. Truly life in this world is full of troubles, sufferings and evil, but Gbordzoe can confidently look up to God to save the nation. Salvation here is seen as blessing, a word that encapsulates all the aspirations and dreams of the *good* Ghanaian. It is in this sense that the Anthem is a cry for divine help in the midst of wickedness. This makes the Anthem a national prayer that must be said with conscious realisation of dependence on God for individual and national victory over everything that might intimidate and dehumanize the *new* Ghanaian. The prayer must be uttered in full expectation of divine assistance. Consequently, the Ghanaian is to eschew any form of despondency but rather embrace the hope of a blessed nation. And yet the realization of such a hope also demands our individual and concerted effort so that there is divine-human co-operation.

### **God Responds Through the Church: I Am the Maker-husband**

Until recently Ghanaian Pentecostals were noted for their apolitical tendencies. They stood on the political sidelines rather than become 'muddy in the waters of politics'. This is changing. Today, a number of Pentecostal church leaders and pastors are involved in politics on the local and national fronts. Some serve as parliamentarians on both sides of the House. Notwithstanding their apolitical past we can still find nationalistic and patriotic themes in some Pentecostal songs, like *Oman Ghanaba*. The English

translation of the first stanza is below. The *Akan* original is found in the appendix.

Sing a joyful song, O citizen of Ghana  
 God has redeemed you  
 Been gracious to you and blessed you  
 Extend your tent left and right  
 The gracious Lord has been merciful to you

**Chorus**

Your God will answer (now)  
 All your petitions for you  
 Your maker and husband  
 His name is the Lord  
 You who once suffered a lot of storms  
 The gracious Lord has been merciful to you

According to Anaman, Ghanaians should celebrate God's redemption. This redemption is not to be taken for granted but is to be seen as a gracious blessing from God. Celebration entails expansion in all spheres of life. It is the kind of unrestricted expansion that embraces all aspects of life: political, economic, social and religious. God wills this because he has granted his mercy to each 'citizen of Ghana'. Actually, there is a double reference in Anaman's use of the phrase 'citizen of Ghana'. It has a personal reference to the individual Ghanaian who enjoys divine benevolence. And yet its corporate reference applies to the whole nation. Both the individual and the nation are to embrace God as their maker and husband.

The maker imagery connotes the idea of creation. Creation here does not imply that God's interest in Ghana ceased at the time of independence. Rather, it includes God's continual interest and involvement in the making of a new nation and person. Creation also includes divine provision, care, protection, attention and love. Therefore God is not only Ghana's maker but also her husband. The song calls to mind the following encouragement from the book of Isaiah.

*Do not fear; for you shall not be ashamed, nor shall you blush; for you shall not be put to shame; for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall He be called (Isaiah 54: 4-5 NKJV).*

This passage of Scripture provides the backdrop for *Oman Ghanaba*. It is against this backdrop that we may interpret the divine assurance of protection in stormy times to Ghanaians. Actually, it seems that each Ghanaian (and the nation) have already passed through the storms and will never see them again. The storm imagery draws heavily on Isaiah's eschatological assurance to Israel with regard to its future remaking. In this new Israel there will be no

suffering; it will be a time of peaceful unity and development. It is with this understanding that we may appreciate that according to the chorus the new Ghanaian nation, like the daughter of Zion, is to rejoice in God.

Significantly, Anaman chooses female imagery because nations are typified as women. The female imagery is significant for us because, being often more vulnerable, women go through many more troubles than men in Ghanaian society. They are abused and abased economically, culturally, sexually, socially and politically. Therefore, full of sorrow, they often resort to God for spiritual succour. Hence as symbolized in the Isaianic text, God seeks to console them. Now they have God to defend them. Women's vulnerability is not God-ordained or created but is artificial and culturally-conditioned, but through Christ they can scale all obstacles. In much the same way, the new Ghanaian nation must trust in God to scale all man-made impediments to freedom and justice.

A careful observation of the song shows an appropriation of Isaianic assurances mixed with nationalistic feelings (Isaiah 54:1-5). The book of Isaiah gives Israel a special hope for the future. It affirms that though Israel will not be spared for her disloyalty to Yahweh<sup>8</sup> the Lord will eventually comfort her and restore her back to her homeland. Thus the prophet spoke of the nation's forthcoming deliverance that will comfort Israel (40:1-11).<sup>9</sup> The salvation the prophet spoke of was to be understood by the people as emanating from the love of God, conferred upon them "only by grace, by the power of God, the Redeemer, rather than by the strength of man or the good works of the flesh."<sup>10</sup> Thus God chastises and purges Israel to "make them fit to participate in His programme of redemption."<sup>11</sup> That is why as a holy God, he does not permit any character defect in his covenant people to remain unchallenged.<sup>12</sup>

Since *Oman Ghanaba* was given to a Pentecostal church one would think that Anaman had the Pentecostal believer in mind. However, considering the inherent nationalistic tendencies, one is obliged to think he had the 'new Ghanaian' in mind. From this we may infer that he was calling on the newly independent Ghanaian to celebrate his/her redemption. Thus redemption had a double meaning. Anaman gave spiritual redemption a nationalistic meaning so that political freedom was tied to spiritual redemption from sin. It was political emancipation that he interpreted as a divine blessing and to which the new Ghanaian must respond by extending his/her tent. "Extend your tent left

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<sup>8</sup> J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 347.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel J. Schultz & Gary V. Smith, *Exploring the Old Testament* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 167.

<sup>10</sup> Gleason L. Archer Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 326.

<sup>11</sup> James D. Smart, *The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man* (London: The Epworth Press, 1965), 116.

<sup>12</sup> Smart, *The Old Testament in Dialogue with Modern Man*, 116.

and right”, an abbreviation of Isaiah’s “*Make the place of your tent larger, and let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings. Do not spare, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes*” (Isaiah 54:2 NKJV). Thus Anaman’s use of religious language echoes Nkrumah’s call to Ghanaians for nation building. According to Anaman, the Ghanaian was so positioned as to have his/her petitions answered by God who doubled as his/her maker and husband. The song thus assured Ghanaians that God was in charge of the new development in the nation and he had chosen to stand with them (“*Your maker and husband*) through “a lot of storms”. These were the stormy days of the colonial period when Ghanaians had no identity except that of the colonial master. But God had been merciful to them by liberating them and so restoring their lost identity. Anaman echoes the Pan-Africanist call for a new African identity.

In contemporary times also some Pentecostal songs have played significant roles in Ghana’s politics. A few months into the 2000 elections that brought the NPP to power, a Church of Pentecost gospel singer sang a song that was appropriated by the NPP’s election campaign. The title track of Cyndi Thomson’s album *Cyndi’s Messiah* was the song *Ewuradze, kasa* (Lord, speak) which pleaded with God to speak into her situation. This idea was transposed into the Ghanaian political situation and capitalised upon by the NPP. Many believe the party’s astute appropriation of the song was in large part responsible for its electoral victory over the then incumbent NDC. The song became hugely popular as many Ghanaians associated its piteous lyrics with what they considered to be socio-economic and political oppression and depression under the NDC.

Like *Oman Ghanaba*, an analysis of Cindy’s song must be placed within the context of the *new freedom* most Ghanaians hoped to gain from the NDC government of President Jerry Rawlings, the former Flight Lieutenant. The NDC was the new form of the erstwhile Provisional National Development Council (PNDC) in 1992. The proclaimed purpose of Rawling’s coup in 1979 was to salvage the nation from socio-economic and political injustice and inequities. By the early 1990s Rawlings’ popularity had waned. The confidence many had reposed in him since 1979 had seriously diminished. By the mid-1990s most Ghanaians were calling for his political exit. They wanted a more capable leader to take over and lead the nation out from under the government’s political repression and the accompanying economic recession. In the view of the NPP, Ghanaians deserved a new leader who could deliver them from life’s harsh conditions. Consequently, their electoral slogan, *Hwē wo asetena mu na to wo aba* (“vote according to your socio-economic and political conditions”) became an instant success.

### **Stretch Out Your Faith**

A number of ideas emerge from the two song-prayers we have looked at. There is a genuine concern for a better future. It is clear that this hope is seen to come from God and demands religious affirmation. This is where the

church, represented in Anaman, comes in with assurance that all hope is not gone; God has a wonderful plan for the nation. He is interested in what concerns Ghanaians and so hears and answers them when they pray. As such Ghanaians are not to bury their heads in the sand of despondency but rather to trust in God's merciful power. Such divine responses are never deferred. The moment one prays, God answers. This emphasis on God's immediate response to prayer contradicts the popular perception that one needs to keep repeating oneself over and over before God hears and comes to one's aid. We often pray expecting a deferred answer and without passion. Often the remaking and remoulding actions that are required to build a better future are left up to God to achieve without human participation. This is what the church must help the nation to correct. Ghanaians must respond to God's new work in the nation. God's continuing presence with the nation demands that Ghanaians 'stretch out their tent' to the right and left. They must open up and co-operate with God to see this new thing that has come to pass.

The church has to affirm, motivate and help the state to fulfill its divine imperatives. To do so, the church should assure the nation of the reality of the Lord's peace. The peace of the Lord is unlike the world's conception of peace. It is peace that is not dependent on present circumstances or conditions, or on the number of difficulties. It is peace that encourages steadfastness in the face of seeming hopelessness. The church's duty is to assure the nation of Christ's guiding and comforting hand as it charts a new course for its citizens. It must assure the nation that God will eventually deliver the faithful. God is able to overcome life's spiritual and physical problems. The church must help the nation to develop an attitude of trust in and dependence on God. Ghanaians must learn to appreciate the sovereignty of God in all their endeavours.

The church's prophetic duty requires it to face the troubles that have and continue to beset the Ghanaian nation. Much of Ghana's fifty plus years have been spent trying to survive the socio-economic and political storms, a situation which seems to contradict the prophetic assurance in *Oman Ghanaba*. Nonetheless, such an understanding of Ghana's situation should not tempt us to believe that the cause of all the evil and suffering in Ghana comes from the domain of the spiritual. Oftentimes, evil and suffering result from human systems that tend to inhibit humanity from achieving anything close to ideal conditions in a country. Submission to the evils in human systems may be deemed expedient by the world's standards but the followers of Christ must choose to obey God rather than the 'earthly principalities'. The church is under divine orders to proclaim to the powers that the purposes of God have been fulfilled in Jesus (Eph 3:10). This means that those who wield power over the less privileged must be held accountable so that they rule faithfully, equitably and justly. This entails speaking out against unjust laws, practices, and acts, and denouncing inflammatory language from politicians and the media. It requires the church to refute unholy arguments and theories espoused in the name of human rights. This should be done dispassionately



without fear or favour. Of course this is possible only when the church cleans up its own stables and removes all the cobwebs of dishonesty, insincerity and nepotism from its own cupboards. Without moral housecleaning within the churches, Christians risk being condemned for practicing the same thing they criticize others for doing. It also demands that the church avoids playing into the hands of the powerful in a foolish bid for popularity and recognition.

Indeed, the church must appreciate that it is necessary that all human beings pass from less human conditions to more human conditions. Less human conditions are the oppressive social structures that inhibit the passage from misery over social scourges to the realization of peace.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the church must help the nation to realize true 'salvation'. Such salvation is not to be conceived only in terms of 'religious' or 'spiritual values' that fail to contribute much to everyday human life.

There is a deep-seated acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in Ghanaians. The church must take advantage of this religiosity to point Ghanaians to the virtues of honesty and humility, necessary ingredients for the development of national consciousness. An acknowledgement of this is a prerequisite for the nation to enjoy God's loving care as its shepherd. Ghanaians, like the Psalmist, look up to God to find satisfaction in their lives. Psalm 23 tells us that we lack nothing when God is our shepherd. The shepherd motif implies that it is God who determines human needs and provides for our enjoyment. This shepherd motif is so important that one cannot help but review it because the motif is absent from African concepts of leadership, whether religious, political, social, familial or economic.

### **God as the Shepherd of Ghana**

Paramount in the Ancient Near Eastern king metaphor was the idea of *shepherd*. Transposed into the socio-economic and political contexts this pastoral word connoted ideas of justice and protection rather than exploitation, violence, oppression and abuse.<sup>14</sup> Throughout Israel's history YHWH was perceived as the true King of Israel and, in later prophetic understandings, the entire world. Consequently, the later monarchical institution was deemed as "a concessive departure from that true sovereignty, God's own".<sup>15</sup> Davidic kingship was subsumed under the Sinaitic covenant which explains why in crucial passages David was called a 'prince' but not king (2 Sam. 7:8). "Yet to concede even princely rule to earthly David was to generate ... 'historic paradox'; it produced a tension that could be resolved only in the eschaton; there God's kingship would be restored at last".<sup>16</sup> Kings thus were to be

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<sup>13</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology Of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1988), iii.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 122.

<sup>15</sup> James W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology, vol. II: Doctrine* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1994), 67.

<sup>16</sup> McClendon, *Systematic Theology*, 67.

humble servants of those they ruled. It is due to this deliberate failure that Ezekiel rebuked Israel's exploitative kings as bad shepherds. Instead of oppression, kings in the Old Testament were to have a preferential option for the poor, the weak and powerless.<sup>17</sup> After all, God's dominion "far from diminishing human freedom stood over against oppression by earthly rulers, its sway setting against injustice, true justice, against unlovingness, pure love".<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the essential nature of justice as conceived in the OT is not blind impartiality, but intervening to set things right, such that those who have been wronged are vindicated, the oppressed are delivered, the weak and vulnerable have their voices heard and their cases attended to.<sup>19</sup> Such an idea, according to Wright, is captured in Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV):

*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,  
For the rights of all who are destitute.  
Speak up and judge fairly;  
Defend the rights of the poor and needy.*

Ghana's life and prosperity depend, in part, on the church raising its prophetic voice on socio-economic and political matters. The church can no longer distance itself from public issues. Otherwise it will stand condemned as being an apathetic form of Christianity. What this implies is that both the church and state become fellow travellers on the road of holistic salvation - a salvation that acquires socio-economic, political and religious character. It is a salvation that sees the Christ-event as inseparable from the renewal of politico-economic and social institutions. It is the kind of posture that rejects any attempt to divest Scripture of its social import by applying it exclusively to individual spiritual salvation. Similarly, it opposes the proposition of an eschatological utopia which oppressors deliberately and gladly use to tranquillise the suffering of the oppressed and to muffle their freedom.<sup>20</sup> Such a state of affairs where the oppressed acquiesce to the will of the oppressor is what Martin Luther King Jr. calls negative peace. Negative peace is the acquiescence to what otherwise is unacceptable to human wellness, but accommodated so as to avoid some kind of 'unwilling' hardship. However, positive or true peace is the presence of justice and brotherhood.<sup>21</sup>

The church and the state should co-operate on the national developmental agenda. This means there should be an ecclesial augmentation of the state's efforts in the realization of freedom for all Ghanaians. Such a realization is

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<sup>17</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123.

<sup>18</sup> McClendon, *Systematic Theology*, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 123-4.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Maimela, "Current Themes and Emphases in Black Theology" in Itumeleng J. Mosala and Tlhagale Buti (eds.), *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Black Theology from South Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1986), 103.

<sup>21</sup> James M. Washington (ed.), *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986), 51.

necessarily situated in the context of human responsibility. This is because human beings are not victims of fatalism. If fatalism rules then human beings are nothing but the product of biological, psychological and sociological conditions and prone to believe anyway. They would be the pawns and victims of outside influences or inner circumstances. But human beings are free moral agents. It is true freedom is restricted, and yet such "freedom is not freedom from conditions but freedom to take a stand toward the condition".<sup>22</sup> Consequently, "freedom is in danger of degenerating into arbitrariness" without human responsibility. Human beings possess potentialities in themselves. Nevertheless, "which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions". The church through its preaching and social concerns is to create in Ghanaians a new spirit of responsibility. Such responsible life must be both personal and national. The church must take a stand against irresponsible personal and corporate attitudes and tendencies that mitigate against national prosperity and growth. The church should challenge the state to clarify its role and duty towards the citizens and also define its developmental objectives. This way the church will be well positioned to monitor and direct the state towards its own agenda for national prosperity. Indeed it is part of the church's prophetic duty to speak against the misuse and abuse of individual and national properties, political deception, manipulation of the innocent and blatant refusal to heed the people's cry for freedom and justice.

### Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to answer the question: "What theological ideas are inherent in Ghanaian prayer-songs for developing a meaningful Ghanaian public life?" The discussions have shown that the idea of secular atheism is alien to the Ghanaian person. As such any attempt to eject God from Ghanaian public life should be vehemently resisted by the church. The church does not have to distance itself from matters of state, and yet where the demands of the state conflict with the will of God, the church must obey God rather than submit to the state's demands. There is a strong felt need for deliverance in order to effect the full realization of humanity among Ghanaians. The Christian attitude is to propose God as the hope to the nation. Such a proposition seeks to underscore the human need for tranquility and peace. Conversely, it underlines the enormity of life's troubles that deprive Ghanaians of peace. It is the search for spiritual and material comfort that requires Ghanaians to look up to God. As John S. Pobee shows, unlike the Stoic teaching that accepted fate and fixed consequences, Jesus' beatitudes taught dependence on God's sovereignty and a reflection on his image that alone brings about inner calm and serenity and salvation. Hence "Blessedness comes from sharing God's life."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 135.

<sup>23</sup> John S. Pobee, "Preface", *Who are the Poor?: The Beatitudes as a Call to Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 5.

## Appendix

*Ōman Ghanaba, tow ehurusi ndwom*  
*Nyame agye wo nkwa*  
*Adom wo, ehyira wo*  
*Trē wo ntamada m' benkum na nyimfa*  
*Adom Ewuradze ehu wo so mbōbōr*

### Chorus

*W'ebisadze nyina, wo Nyame bēyē ama wo*  
*Wo yēfo nye wo kun*  
*Ne dzin enye Ewuradze*  
*Ōmandzehunyi a da bi ehum tuu wo*  
*Adom Ewuradze ehu wo so mbōbōr<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> S.A.K. Karikari & Kofi Sefa-Dwamena (compilers), *Pentekost Asōre Nnwom* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Accra: Pentecost Press Ltd., 2003), 192.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Richard J. Gehman

*Learning to Lead:  
The Making of a Christian Leader in Africa*

Geneva IL: Oasis International, 2008

335 = xiii pp, pb. ISBN 978-1-59452-090-7 \$10.00 US

Reviewed by Titus M. Kivunzi

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The author served in theological education in Kenya for 36 years, including several years as Principal of Scott Theological College. He has provided an exceptional handbook on Christian leadership in Africa based partly on extensive interviews with African pastors and partly on his own personal observations and involvements. In preparation for writing the book, Gehman visited church leaders in their working areas and listened to them with notebook and pen in hand. By engaging with mature, experienced African leaders, ones who responded honestly about the ups and downs of their ministry, their successes and failures, he has made a unique contribution to the church in Africa.

Among other things, the book is very honest about the challenges of leadership, the “sweet and sour elements”. In order to explore this idea the author carefully addresses numerous aspects that are necessary for leadership. Each of these qualities is explained in practical detail in terms of pros and cons, pointing out what happens when leaders lose track of their own spiritual journey and end up failing while “succeeding”. Had the book existed early in the last century, many Christian leaders would be in better situations than the ones we see today.

Gehman advises that if we do not learn continuous self-discipline we will fail. While leadership is a noble appointment from God, on earth where it is practiced there are many trials and temptations. Because of this, leadership gifts and skills must be integrated with good character traits. No one is really a leader who only possesses gifts and skills, but is void of the fruit of the Spirit in which Christian character is epitomized. The book is articulate in discussing the personal spiritual discipline required for church leadership. It cautions

church leaders that “the servant of the Lord who fails to discipline himself continually, ‘for the purpose of godliness’ will fail” (p.45). This is to say that discipline should not be taken as a one-time victory but rather as a continuous exercise. This caution reminds me of a story I heard about a young Bible school graduate who attended his first church leaders’ meeting. Instead of taking time to listen to the deliberations, he frequently interjected points about how things were badly conducted. He was advised to be patiently listening to others so as to be able to offer wise counsel. In response to that advice he rose up and said, “Don’t you know that I have a BA degree from a good Bible college?” Hearing this remark, one elder said to the young graduate, “Young man, sit down and we will teach you the rest of the alphabet.”

Another positive point I find in this book is the way Gehman describes the church. He says that when he asked people what they meant by church, he had various answers. For example, some referred to “the church” as the places where they assemble for worship, that is, buildings constructed to look different from ordinary homes or public schools. But this book gives biblical definitions of the church as “the Body of Christ”, “the Temple of the Holy Spirit”, and as both a spiritual organism (the invisible church) and an institutional organisation (pp. 37-38). These definitions help leaders to grasp the true meaning of the church with whose leadership they have been entrusted. The author points out that Christ is the sole owner of the people He saves, not a co-owner. This church is maintained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Because of this, all believers in Jesus Christ must without reservation pledge total allegiance to their Lord and Saviour. He goes on to clarify some Biblical terms used for leaders because these terms so often get confused with egotistic human desires. Such terms include elder, bishop and overseer. He corrects a mistaken notion that some of these titles are lesser in dignity than others. He points out that all of them “serve under the chief shepherd” to whom all leaders are responsible and to whom they will give an account of their service.

Gehman says that his book is not a multipurpose book on leadership; rather it aims to single out leadership that is distinctively Christian. Gehman reminds readers that Christian leaders need to understand that they are neither self-appointed nor appointed by other people, but appointed by God. Thus His servants are to give service to the church of Jesus Christ.

The author discusses in detail the need for agape love. In particular I was impressed with the way he presented the subject of forgiveness as one of the most difficult things for God’s people to practice in handling the difficulties experienced almost continually in day to day leadership.

The book highlights the process through which leadership abilities should be developed in order to avoid the stagnation in leadership so evident in many circles today. Gehman emphasizes that preparation for ministry does not end with graduation from a theological college. Such learning is a process and

must continue. There is no one gift, skill or character trait that is enough for effective service without other gifts, skills and character traits working alongside it. Rather than thinking that gaining one strength or ability is sufficient for good leadership, we must be continually growing in order to improve our leadership capacities.

The author says that he is seeking to place in the hands of his readers the answers to two questions: “What kind of Christian leader do we need according to the Scriptures?” and “How do we prepare this kind of Christian leader?” The result is a rare and deep well of information, definition and clarification for Christian leaders in Africa. Pastors everywhere should read it, and theological colleges should use it in preparing their students for the realities of pastoral ministry in Africa.



**Guy Brandon**

## ***Just Sex: Is It Ever Just Sex?***

Nottingham: IVP, 2009

224 pp, ISBN: 978-1-84474371-1 £9.99

Reviewed by Elias Ng'etich, Scott Theological College

From Guy Brandon's ministry perspective, many people today are very confused about sex. *Just Sex* encourages readers to consider the impact of sexual relationships on others. This book explains the strength and integrity of the Christian worldview regarding sex. Sex is an issue among Christians because many Christians live in a sexually permissive environment. The author suggests practical and compassionate solutions. *Just Sex* uses both a social and a theological approach to present its truth.

Though written in a British context, *Just Sex* deserves to be studied and discussed in Africa. It is packed with startling facts and figures, effective quotes and lively personal stories. "The book does not seek to provide a systematic interpretation of the biblical texts dealing with sexual ethics, but an explanation of why God's ideal is good" [page 50]. Brandon discerns the reasons behind the biblical teaching on sex. The starting point is that God intended sex to take place only within marriage. It provides clear social, psychological and financial reasons why the Bible has a better vision for human sexuality than that found in the confusion of contemporary culture. Church leaders are divided over key sexual issues such as divorce, homosexuality and sex before marriage. Why? A few fear being accused of intolerance and prejudice. Such fears can obscure the need to uphold the biblical standard.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of 'relational order'; that relational order is dependent on right relationships, both sexual and non-sexual. It is an idea that reflects the quality of the relationship within the trinity, in whose image our humanity is cast. The author's concept goes a long way in helping the reader understand biblical sexual ethics. Our well being is affected by our relationships. If anything has been lost in our culture, then it is a relational perspective. This is the case when success and happiness are defined in terms of finances and material prosperity. The author asserts that healthy relationships provide a positive vision for a society. Christianity is a relational religion. "Throughout the Bible, strong relationships are the currency of well

being and a barometer of social health” [page 24]. Peace as he defines it, “is an active enjoyment of relationships, health and prosperity”. Intimacy and relational wholeness are dependant on psychological health. Psychosocially, all development is an interpersonal and relational process, and it is only with reference to others that we understand ourselves. And sex is an integral part of this. Sex with no context makes possible “nakedness of the soul”. Sex is neither a condition of intimacy nor a guaranteed route to it. “There is no such thing as the isolated individual...all real life is meeting” quoting J.H. Oldham. It is through response to other persons that we become persons. It is others who challenge, enlighten and enrich us.

*Just Sex* considers briefly the pattern of marriage set out in Genesis 1 and 2. To be human is to be relational because God is relational. The argument is that “marriage, with its promises of permanence, stability and faithfulness, reinforces and promotes qualities that are intrinsically good for relational order”. [page 103]. The theme is that sexual relationships affect a much wider group of people than just those immediately involved in them. *Just Sex* shows through the case study approach that what consenting adults do in private affects others. Life cannot be compartmentalized into a private realm of ‘consenting adults’. Sex shapes society in a real sense. This is because our individual sexual choices are each a small part of the overall mosaic of the culture we live in.

Therefore consent alone is inadequate for meaningful and fulfilling sex, the author insists. This goes against the grain of prevailing conventional wisdom. The book not only delineates an orthodox view on sexual ethics, but also provides a persuasive apologetic for the watching world. The relevance of the book lies with its ability to point to the transforming power of the Christian worldview. The book does this by providing the reader with categories, approaches and evidence that speak persuasively and prophetically to contemporary culture. It tackles the psychological and cultural conditions required for mature, healing sex. The sexual chaos that we see today is a symptom of a deeper disease: “I can live my life on my own terms, without reference to other people” [page 19]. The thrust of the book is that sex without responsibility causes the decay and disintegration of the social fabric. The clear message to the contemporary society is that it is wrong about sex.

The world has distorted God’s concept of sexuality. Sex is not for fun; there is more to it. It is not ‘just sex’. Men and women are made in the image of God and their sexual behaviour in some manner participates in the divine likeness. An improper approach to sex leads to a lifetime of emotional scars.

Though the examples cited are from the U.K., similar situations are found here in Kenya and in Africa as a whole. I recommend this book to lay Christians, pastors and youth workers.

# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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