ON THE WORK AND WORHIP OF THE CHURCH

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The new pastor was bombarded with requests. "The women's fellowship would like to build a new fellowship hall", he was told by one of the members. The young people wanted electric guitars for the choir. The elders asked if he would agree to be Chairman of the Board for the church-owned polytechnic. Some University graduates came to him as a delegation to ask what he was going to do about local poverty and rural development. The questions seemed to come in floods, "Can we use drums in the service?", "Should we as a church support a certain candidate in the next election?", "Should the church building be used for political rallies?", "Should we hold healing services on Sunday", "Could we start discipleship groups", and on and on the stream of inquiries went. The young pastor soon realised that he needed a clearer grasp of some basic biblical truths about the Church if he was to answer wisely the waves of questions about what the work and worship of the Church should be.

We want to look at some crucial questions about the work and worship of the Church in Africa. Let's look at 10 key questions about the Church's ministry and worship and see what the scriptures have to say.

1. What are the major purposes of the Church on earth? What does it mean for the Christians to be the "light" and "salt" of the world (Mt. 5:14-16)?

Purposes of the Church

The Church as the body of Christ and community of believers exists for specific purposes. According to the A.E.A.M. 4th General assembly meeting in Malawi in 1984, the formost overall purpose of the Church is 'to glorify God' in all things. The Christian Church is called out to work to this end. What are the ways to glorify God? Note four: by Worshipping God (Psalm 29:2); being holy in all manner of life (I Cor. 6:19, 20); producing the fruit of the Spirit (Phil. 1:11); and being witnesses for Christ (Phil. 2:11; Acts 1:8; Mt. 28:19, 20):[1] Thus glorifying God in all things means exalting Him in the total life of the entire Christian community.

Take a closer look at the issue of worship. Worship comprises both celebration and instruction. In her worship, the Church celebrates all that God is and what He has done for her through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the other

hand, instruction consists of the reading of God's word and its proclamation. As a result, Christians are taught the implications of their faith which enable them to grow in both doctrinal awareness and practical Christian living. In this manner, individual Christians are helped in their understanding of God's word as well enabled to stand firm against heretical teaching.

Another way in which the Church glorifies God is through enhancing community life. From the biblical perspective, community is almost as important and vital as worship. Just as a household is not really a family unless it meets and shares time together, so with the Church when believers do not share time together. The Church as a body thrives and fulfils her purpose when believers enjoy life together as a community. We need to take seriously the biblical teaching that Christians are members one of another. Shared life means that not only are believers members one of another, but that they should take responsibility for each other's welfare.

There are two basic elements in the Church's community life which should be noted. First, there is the matter of discipline which should be taken seriously. Though the Church is a community that does not mean condoning sin. On the contrary, believers should accept responsibility for each other and agree to exercise the necessary measure of discipline. This must be done in the spirit of love.

The second important element is the use of spiritual gifts. The Church is a spiritually rich community in that each believer has been endowed with a spiritual gift or gifts (i.e. spiritual abilities to serve others) for the good of the body of Christ and for God's glory. Thus, these gifts (I Cor. 12; 14; Romans 12 and Ephesians 4) have been sovereignly given by the Holy Spirit that the Church should use them to fulfill her God intended purpose here on earth.

The final way in which the Church glorifies God is through witnessing for Christ and thus fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19, 20). The zeal and commitment to witness must start at the local and individual level before it becomes a national and international enterprise. Experience has taught us that a Church weak in worship has little (if any) inclination to witness. Similarly, a Church without vital community life experience has no commitment to witness.

We should point out that while all Christians are not meant to be evangelists (with a special calling to proclaim the gospel to those who haven't yet received it), yet each Christian is meant to be a witness for christ (Acts 1:8). It is worth noting that, "A Church in whose preaching there is the authority of the spirit, in whose worship there is the joy of the spirit, in whose fellowship there is the love of the spirit and in whose service the gifts of the spirit are in full use - such Church will witness to Christ by being itself. It will convey to others that Jesus is alive and sharing His life with His people."

Involvement in Society

Salt and light are quite common commodities in day to day life. As it was during Jesus day, so it is today that in many African Countries salt is the best known preservative and antiseptic. Moreover, many African people know the importance of light, especially after sun set. In an average home, candles and lamps are used in order to enable those in the house to see light. In Matthew 5:14-16 when Jesus refers to Christians as the salt and light of the world, He is speaking of fundamental truths. Consider four implications of His teaching.

First, Christians and non-Christians are fundamentally different.[2] On the one hand, there is the world of darkness while on the other hand, there are the children of light. Similarly, there is the evil world which needs salt. The Salt represents the Church as that distinct redemptive commodity so desparately needed by the world yet so distinctly different. The second implication is that Christians have the responsibility of penetrating non-Christian Society.[3] Thus, Christians as salt, must penetrate into the morally decaying world and as light, they must shine into the dark world. The third is that Christians can influence and change non-Christian society. Experience has taught us that both salt and light always produce change. Decay is arrested and darkness chased when these powerful forces are at work. Christians as salt and light can change non- Christian society by both word (proclaiming the Gospel message) and character (Godly living). The fourth implication is that Christians must retain their distinctiveness. Jesus teaches us therefore, that the salt must retain its saltiness, otherwise it becomes useless and fit only for being thrown away. Similarly, the light must continue to shine even more brightly, otherwise it becomes darkness. Christians can penetrate society with the Gospel and godly character, without being defiled by the world. Thus, the under lying principle is that of "penetration without assimilation". Part of that penetration is through evangelism.

2. What is the best way to define evangelism? What do Mt. 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8 teach about the duty and dynamics of Biblical evangelism?

The term "evangelism" has been defined in various ways. It may be defined as follows: "The Winning of men to acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and King, so that they may give themselves to His service in the fellowship of His Church".[4] Another definition of evangelism is "the conversion of people from worldliness to Christ like godliness". Lets use as our working definition that evangelism is telling other people of the gospel of salvation through Jesus with the aim that they might repent, believe and find new life in Him.[5] The definition raises the issues of both the gospel's content as well as the horizon of culture.

What is the content of the evangelistic message? In other words, what is the New Testament Gospel? The Gospel may be described as "the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and

that as the reigning Lord He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe."[6] This is the message the world lost in sin needs to hear. The Church in Africa and the world at large must proclaim this message with all ferver and zeal.

What of the gospel and culture? Some argue that the gospel message is irrelevant to the modern age since it was shaped by the Graeco-Hebrew and Roman cultures. This assertion is based on a misunderstanding of the gospel. Although God disclosed Himself in a particular culture, He did so in a way that speaks to all cultures for all time. Therefore, the Church in a given culture is responsible to make the gospel message relevant to the particular culture in which it finds itself. The methods of proclamation may vary, yet there is but one unchanging gospel.

The preaching the gospel demands both truth and timeliness. The message we preach must be both truthful and contemporary. But it is quite a mistake to think that our message must be dictated by current needs. True evangelism should never be described as answering the questions men are asking. The Bible teaches that 'evangelism' is first and formost the communication of God's question to man. The question God puts to man is whether man would accept Jesus as the one and only Lord of life.

The Great Commission: God's strategy of evangelism:

In Matthew 28:19, 20, we have much to learn regarding the duty and dynamics of biblical evangelism. The preceding verse points out clearly that Christ, the Lord of the Church has ultimate authority over the universe. The verses in question and other portions of Scripture declare that the objective of Christ's commission is to bring men and women to the knowledge of the truth. This is accomplished by making disciples through preaching and teaching rather than merely making converts. Disciples are those who have come to Christ by faith and are being taught of Him continually. Thus from a biblical perspective evangelism is a process rather than a point. The second important ingredient of the Great Commission is that it is universal in scope. It addresses itself to all nations, meaning that the gospel message is for everyone. It is no wonder that the Church of Christ is composed of people from every nation and tongue. Looking at the Church today, we are amazed at the fact that there are Christians almost everywhere covering every social class of people. The third and final ingredient in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 is that God's presence is ever with his people.

According to Acts 1:8, those who would make disciples for Jesus must first be endowed with power from on high. Such power gives enabling and makes one an effective witness for Christ. A witness is one who testifies of something he has seen or heard. All Christians are called upon to be witnesses of Christ's saving power. The message was initially to be preached to the dwellers of Palestine then to the whole world, as Acts and the epistles testify. The geographical terms of Acts 1:8 provide a sort of index of contents for the entire book of Acts, under the theme "You shall be my witness". Thus, being witnesses in Jerusalem

covers the first seven chapters; in all Judea and Samaria chapters 8:1-11:18 and the uttermost parts of the earth covers the rest of the book. We therefore conclude that the Church of Jesus christ is commanded to carry Christ's message of salvation to every people group.

3. How should the African Church understand its ministry of teaching? What do Eph. 4:16 and II Timothy 2:2 have to say about the Church's task to teach? As you think about the way Africans have traditionally prepared their young people for adulthood what useful principles can be gleaned to guide the Church in its training task?

The Teaching Ministry of the Church

Ephesians 4:6 stresses the organic relationship between Christ and His body, the Church. As the Head, Christ causes the body to live and grow. He also exercises authority over the Church. In this verse, Paul uses a physiological metaphor which is also echoed in Colossians 2:19. There are two important concepts to be noted. First, Christ is the goal (the all in all of His people). The Church's life becomes what it ought to be by constant communion with Christ who is the source of her vitality. Secondly, Christ is the sovereign Lord of the Church. His risen life is diffused throughout an invisible fellowship scattered through out space and time, to which the physical organism offers a close analogy.[7]

Regarding the proper functioning of the body of Christ, we should observe that just as the human body functions when each membrane and organ does its part, so with the Church. In other words, the Church grows when the God-given spiritual gifts are properly used and when each member fulfils his or her God intended purpose. There is a need for active participation within the body of Christ. The end result is both a mature Church as well as a loving community, in which mutual edification prevails. Just as the human body when properly supported and held together, experiences normal growth, so also the Church, when each of its members supports and maintains loving contact with their Head and fellow members grow from grace to grace.[8]
In Ephesians 4:16, we should observe the following: Christ is the goal and source of the life development of the Church. Secondly, the whole Church should be actively involved in the growth process. There should be no idle members or spectators. Thirdly, each member should consciously seek the Lord for His supply of power and ability to facilitate the growth necessary. Fourthly, no individual Christian should think he can grow alone. Christians need each other.

In order to have a mature Church, God's whole counsel must be conveyed to every member of the body of Christ. In II Timothy 2:2, Paul encourages Timothy (who represents the Church leadership in general) to be faithful in transmitting to others God's truths already committed to him. The Church as the teaching agent needs to be reminded of the need to produce mature disciples. These words are especially important since Paul is about to depart from this world. He has carried the gospel torch

long enough, hence he hands it to Timothy who in turn must, pass it on to others.[9] The deposit which the Church has received from the Lord Himself must be entrusted to trustworthy people who in turn must teach others. The end result of this type of ministry is that, the Church will consist of men and women who are mature. Such discipleship ministry both ensures growth in the Church as well as dispel spiritual and intellectual ignorance in the Church. The Church in Africa needs this kind of ministry more than ever before since the Churches are filled with converts who are not discipled. When we are told that by the year 2000 the African Church will double in size to 400 million we can only project increased need for the discipling of our congregations.

Based on II Timothy 2:2, we should conclude that the gospel of redemptive truth which the Church has received from Christ must be faithfully transmitted to every generation. This teaching ministry is best accomplished through the multiplication process in which the teachers are those who both know the truth and who order their lives according to biblical principles. They should be reliable people who will in turn produce other mature Christians.

The Church should learn from the way Africans prepared their young people for adulthood. The approach was that older women for example, spent considerable amount of time giving instructions to girls concerning steps towards womanhood. These girls had the freedom to ask questions to which the women would adequately respond. Similarly, boys greatly benefited from the instructions mature men gave them. Thus, older men spent a good amount of time with boys in several locations. First, there were places outside the home (in the case of the Kamba tribe of Kenya), by the gate where boys would sit under the instruction of older men around a fire place. In this context, young boys would be taught many things such as sayings of the wise, ancestral roots, how to look for a wife (giving guidelines concerning characteristics of a good wife), ethical principles etc. Secondly, there were organized hunting groups in which young men would observe things such as: how to make bow and arrows, the best way to shoot animals etc. In this context boys would learn both the theory and practise of hunting. The Church here in Kenya has begun to apply some of these principles to some extent. For example, the Christian Education Department of the Africa Inland Church, Kenya has programs for both girls and boys. In the girls' program (known as Cadettes) there are events such as cooking, homemaking, child care, bible study, singing etc. The sole aim of these programs is to prepare young people toward personal encounter with Christ and teaching them to grow in Him.

4. How can the Church of Africa become a serving Church? What community needs should Churches be addressing in order to show the love of Christ?

The Church should be concerned about the total man. Every person has spiritual, physical, intellectual and social needs to which the Church should address herself. Some of the community needs include famine or hunger relief, visiting the fatherless

and widows, ministry to the sick, speaking against corruption, ministry to the poor. while the primary task of the Church is to make disciples, the Church should not close her eyes to community needs. The Bible is quite vivid on this issue (see Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:32-36). The point here is that the Christian community should have a wider love, which extends beyond the four walls of the church building. We need to point out however that these works of love should be done in the name of Jesus and for His glory and not as ends in themselves. Balance is needed that we don't emphasize social concern to the extent of losing sight of the Church's primary goal of preaching the Gospel. The Church lives in the world as well as in the Church and has responsibility to both the world and the Church. Unfortunately, Churches tend to "ecclesiastise" their members.[10] The Church should recognize that Christians are converted from the world and should be sent back into the same world to convert and shape it for Christ. A question needs to be posed at this juncture: What is the relationship between member ship in the Church and witness in the world? There are three approaches to this issue. The first view says that we should preach the gospel without having anything to do with social concern. The second view says that we should preach a purely social gospel without concern for conversion to Christ. The third approach says that we should preach the Gospel with the view to ministering to the whole man. The end result is that Christ becomes Lord over the whole man.

Three terms can help us avoid unnecessary misunderstanding on the issue of serving. The first one is 'social concern'. This is an attitude of Christian awareness that salvation is directed to the total man (a holistic approach which takes into consideration man's spiritual, social, physical and intellectual needs). Thus, social concern is an awareness that the Gospel should be applied to the totality of man's needs.[11] The second term is social welfare, which may be defined as all the services Churches or Christians render to help the victims of social problems such as medical clinics, rescue mission, flood relief etc. The third term is 'social action', which aims at bringing about corrective measures to social and political structures that cause problems among the society. Further, social action aims at exercising political power within a particular government and perhaps trying to overthrow that regime and installing a different one.

Should the Church be involved in political action? This question is very sensitive especially here in Africa. Evangelicals differ in their convictions regarding the issue. What of South Africa? What of oppressive regimes and revolutionary anarchy? Some hold that the Church should not be involved in social action but should leave that to the world. This does not rule out the idea of speaking against evils in society from God's word. But it is outside the bounds of the Church, to be involved in political resistance to governments. Jesus taught us that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). If the Church engages herself in politics, her true mission in the world will be marred. It should be pointed out that this view does not forbid Christian individuals from

becoming involved in politics in order to build the nation. The Lausanne Covenant deftly expresses this balance when it reminds us that "although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty."

5. **What about the African Church's responsibility to be one? What biblical guidelines should we follow in working towards this mark? Is a common commitment to the truths of Scripture essential for true unity to take place? What are the differences in the approach to unity taken by the WCC and AACC on the one hand, and the AEAM and WEF on the other.**

Organic Unity

How can we speak of unity in the face of independent Churches, and isolated denominations? Statisticians speak of 6000 African Independent Churches found predominantly in East Africa, Zimbabwe, Zaire, Nigeria and Ghana. Roman Catholics, Ethiopian Orthodox and various main-line protestant groups add to the complex diversity. Yet the search for unity is not futile. The underlying concept is that the Church is the body of Christ (that is an organism formed of many members joined together through faith in the atoning work of the resurrected and soon coming Christ). Thus the way to belong to Christ is through the experience of the 'new birth' (John 3:3). In the body, Jesus Christ is the head and all believers are therefore one in Him. This unity is not based on any organizational relationship nor upon the fact that the persons are Church goers, nor even on the fact of having names on a Church record, but on the fact that each member within the body has been born again John 3:16; II Cor. 8:9; Ephesians 2:8, 9). When we talk of unity in the Church, we should emphasize that such unity must be spiritual rather than physical. It is unity based on divine initiative and not human efforts. God has come to seek and save lost humanity. For this reason, unity in the Church demands holiness of character. There is no value at all in talking about unity within the Church, irrespective of the holiness of life as an important quality which should characterize each individual Christian, a local congregation as well as the universal body of Christ (cf. I Peter 1:13-17). Holiness is not an option but a must for Christians. Thus, in working towards unity, we should realize that it is imperative for the members of the body to resemble the one who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Unity in the Truth

An important ingredient in the Church's unity is purity of doctrine. We cannot promote unity regardless of doctrinal stance, otherwise, this will be a form of compromise. Moreover, such unity will be artificial and fragile because it will never endure. We should heed the biblical admonition, "If any one

comes to you and does not bring this teaching [that Christ has come in the flesh] do not take him into your house or welcome him . . . Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work(2 John 10,11)."[12]

Unity is desirable, but not at the expense of truth. Evangelical Christians must follow the true light even when it means separation from a blood relative. True unity therefore must take God's truth seriously (i.e. all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible). As Hans Kung has said: "The basis for the unity of the Church, and for the unification of the Churches lies in their obedience to this one message given by our Lord."[13] Our basic presupposition is that the Bible is the inerrant and inspired word of God which which presents to us in flawless perfection the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Kung again stresses this note of apostolicity as the basis for unity:

> Any Church which preaches an earthly kingdom rather than the kingdom of God, any Church which preaches instead of the Kyrios Jesus Christ another or a second Kyrios, any Church which teaches that man can be saved by his own efforts rather than by the grace of God, which preaches human slavery rather than human freedom, falsehood rather than truth, egoism rather than love--any such Church would find not just individual documents, but the entire writings of the New Testament unanimously ranged against him.[14]

Any effort towards unity in the Church which fails to accept the above assertion falls short of the facts. Evangelical Christians should work together towards unity. Evangelical fellowships on every continent are working towards this goal of unity in the gospel. Such groups seek to unite Christians in maintaining their unity and working together in order to fulfil the global mission of the Church universal.

We need to emphasize that this kind of unity among those who truly know and love the Lord is a biblical unity. This is what Jesus had in mind in His high priestly prayer in John 17. His prayer was that Christians should be one as He and the Father are one. It is the same thing Paul had in mind in Ephesians 4:3, "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

6. What can the contemporary African Church learn from the rich heritage of worship found in African traditional religion?

Ancestor worship in African Tradition

One of the main features of African Traditional worship is ancestor worship. The idea here is that the dead people continue to influence the living. For this reason, one's ancestors should be venerated since they can still give guidance and instruction to the living. Thus in order for the living to live a peaceful and enjoyable life here on earth, it is believed that one should keep in touch with the departed through mediums or medicine men. The traditinal belief, still widely held, is that through some sort of spell, the mediums can connect the living with their departed ancestors.

The second main characteristic of African Traditional worship is prayer. It is agreed by authorities in African studies that prayer is an integral part of African Traditional worship. John Mbiti's statement is conclusive in this regard :

> Prayer is reported among at least half of the peoples studies in this book and no doubt the number would be greater if more information were available. Most of the prayers are addressed to God, and some to the living dead, divinities, or other beings, many of whom serve as intermediaries.[15]

Prayer therefore has been established as a necessary aspect of every form of African Traditional worship. There are two basic questions to be asked. First, what is the nature of these African Traditional prayers? Secondly, what is the content of these prayers? Concerning the first question, it is generally believed that prayer in African Traditional worship is usually petitionary. The main aim is making requests known to the deity. A good example may be found in the Akamba people of Kenya, who traditionally pray to **Mulungu**, the supreme being in the hope that their petitions would be heard and granted. Concerning the second question, it should be observed that the contents of prayer in African Traditional worship is largely for material and physical blessings. Some of the main concerns are: protection from sickness and death, a long life, material prosperity, victory over enemies, protection from evil spirits etc. The objective of these prayers is to discover what a person or community can get out of the supreme being. There does not seem to be any concern about the deity's will. The only concern of the individual or community is to bend the deity to their own liking and wishes. This is the opposite of the Christian perspective on prayer as communion with God. We can learn from the devotion and diligence of our African ancestors in prayer but must move beyond this traditin and fully embrace biblical perspectives.

The third important feature in African Traditional worship is the sacrificial systems. According to African Traditional Religions, sacrifices are taken very seriously. They are thought to contribute to ongoing communion between man and deity. Through sacrifices man can maintain an already established relation with his god. Mbiti's description is interesting:

> Sacrifices and offerings are acts of restoring the ontological balance between god and man, the spirits and man, and the departed and the living. When this balance is upset, people experience misfortunes and sufferings, or fear that these will come upon them. Sacrifices and offerings help at least psychologically to restore this balance.[16]

Sacrifices in African Traditional worship involve an animal such as a goat (of special colour, usually black and spotless in the case of the Kamba people); sheep etc. On the other hand, offerings involve no animal life or blood but simply items such as grain, oil etc. Meal and drink offerings are usually offered at shrines (daily) or under designated sacred large trees such as

fig trees and they are usually offered to divinities on sacred days. Offerings such as, goodwill offerings, are offered in the cases of remembering the death of a relative or commemorating the death of an ancestor, or invoking the support of the ancestors for some undertaking to be embarked upon by a member of the family.[17] Other types of offerings are items such as ornaments, animals (offered alive), birds, vegetables etc. These items are usually offered as expression of gratitudes due to the acts of benevolence shown to an individual or family by the deity. Moreover, there are appeasement sacrifices offered in the context of communal crises, e.g. when the community suffers some epidemic, famine, serious droughts etc. It should be observed that, according to experts in this field, the ritual varies from tribe to tribe, though in most cases, the animal is either buried, burned or treated with oil and exposed.[18] As soon as the ritual finishes, the situation changes, signifying that divine wrath has been removed from the community. For the Christian we can continue the reverence for the concept of sacrifice by focusing on Christ as our full and final sacrifice for sin.

7. **Is worship for a Christian to be limited to a few hours on Sunday morning or is it to be a matter of everyday lifestyle? What is the purpose of corporate worship on Sunday? Do some Christians confuse this action of praise with true worship? What can ATR teach us that would enrich our understanding of worship? What light do Romans 12:12 and John 4:11-13 shed on the misconception that worship is essentially something done on Sundays in a particular building called a Church?**

Worship as a way of life

Romans 12:1, 2 speaks powerfully to the issue of true worship. In verse one, Paul uses the term **parakaleo** (beseech, implore, beg) to alert the Church that what follows represents what God deeply desires for the believer.[19] The appeal is made on the basis of what God has done for the Church through Christ and his atoning sacrifice as described in chapters 4-11. Paul makes it clear that God's deep desire is for the believer to offer his whole body or being to God. The word 'body' is indicative of the totality of life. As believers, each one individually and the whole Church corporately are urged to serve God with their whole being. Offering ourselves wholeheartedly to God is a day to day act of worship. The body is to be offered as a living sacrifice (not like the sacrifice of a slain animal but a living ongoing act of permanent and continual service and self-denial). It must be holy, reflecting the very character of God Himself made possible only by the believer's sanctification through the Holy Spirit. This becomes the believer's spiritual or worshipful service. The point here is that the offering of ourselves or bodies should involve a conscious intelligent and consecrated devotion to God. We are challenged by Romans 12 not to be conformed to the lifestyle of our day, but to be transformed in the inner life. Thus, godliness is not an option for believers but a must and a day to

day experience for which believers should strive. We should emphasize that worship - attributing worth to God, honouring Him in all things should not be limited to a few hours on Sunday morning. Rather, it should encompass the whole being and a matter of every day life style. Those who worship God rightly are those who live godly lives. What then about Sunday Worship?

The significance of Sunday Worship

Corporate worship has great significance for Christians. When a body of believers meet together on Sundays, their spirits are lifted up as they sing praises to God, pray together, hear God's word read and preached to them. Moreover, they as a group are drawn closer to God and to each other, as they unite in praise and thanksgiving to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This state of affairs takes place if and when each individual believer is spiritually in tune with God. Thus for worship to be meaningful, each individual believer must be walking in fellowship with God through constant Bible study, prayer and in obedience to God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. True worship is not merely going through the prescribed order of service. Rather, it is comprehensive in nature, affecting the total being and in all respects of life. Thus, believers should worship God in spirit and in truth. Since worship is attributing worth to God, it should be more than doing something on a Sunday morning. Believers should worship God through their daily life experiences such as: eating, work, family affairs, personal relations, ownership of property, possessions etc. As such only worshiping and worshipful individuals will make up a worshiping and worshipful community of believers.

Learning from African Tradition

There is much that the Church can learn from African Traditional Religion concerning worship. For example the traditional conception of worship is that it should affect all aspects of life, every day and everywhere (though there may be shrines and sacred places of worship). Worship affects all that an individual and community engages in. This includes such events as having sickness in the family, during planting and harvest time (in which the deity and the living dead are invoked and consulted), in times of epidemics, drought etc. The whole point here is that worship is integrated in the people's daily lifestyle - and experiences. Thus the Christian Church should look at the worship of God from the point of view of a daily affair, and not a one day per week act. We need to point out however, that both the object and objective of Christian worship are different from that of ATR. In ATR, man fights his own way to get to the supreme deity through intermediaries and with the goal of getting the most out of the deity. In contrast Christian believers worship God for who He is (Creator and sustainer of the universe and author of redemption). When Christians worship God, they do so in acknowledging His worth as well as His works.

The Church as the company of the redeemed worship Christ

with the view to ascribing Him worth for who He is, as well as proclaiming to the nations what He has done and anticipating His imminent return. Thus Christians should reflect on what the angels, the living creatures and elders in Revelation 5, perpetually assert:

> You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on earth. Worthy is the lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise (Revelation 5:9, 10, 12).

Worship in Spirit and Truth

According to John 4:21-23, worship should not be confined to a Sunday experience in a building called "church". God is far more interested in the heart condition of the worshipper than He is with the building. In the passage referred to above, Jesus set forth the overwhelming truth that God is concerned about the manner of worship and not necessarily the place of worship. The issue here is not this or that mountain or church building, but how should the true worshippers approach the true and living God. Jesus makes it clear that genuine worship of God is spiritual. It is not dependent on places and things.[20] It should be pointed out however, that we cannot denounce the necessity of church building on the basis of these verses. The point here is that true worship can occur even outside the church building since worship must be spiritual and from a sincere heart. The passage does not advocate the view that Christians should worship alone at homes, without Sunday worship services. This would be a misunderstanding of the biblical text. When true worshippers meet together to worship God on Sunday, their worship will be full of meaning.

8. **As we think of the proper way to conduct our corporate worship together in what ways has the African Church borrowed Western forms of worship? Has African Christian Worship been contextualized sufficiently? Explore this matter giving specific guidelines that should govern Christian worship in the African context.**

Architecture, Music and Orders of Service

First the African Church owes much to the Church from the West, in that the former was founded by the latter. Not only should we talk of the initial starting of the Church in Africa, but the African Church in various parts of the continent has grown to its present state largely by the support it has received from the West. This support is in both people and funds. The second thing worth mentioning is that the African Church can conduct true worship of God the creator and sustainer of the

universe in its own distinctive ways. Of special importance is the question of corporate worship. It is not an over statement to say that the African Church has borrowed Western forms of worship. These forms manifest themselves in three areas namely: architecture, music and ritual (order of service).

Church architecture in Africa has borrowed, and in many benefited from Western Church styles. It is good and fitting to put up well structured, spacious and beautiful buildings as the places of worship for the living and true God. In the Ancient Near East, people expressed love for their God by the kind of temple they built for him. Thus, the kind of building expressed the nature and majesty of the so called god. By the same token, the house in which the living God is worshipped should be well built. As such, Christians should use modern ways of architecture and design, in church buildings. Yet there is a danger to avoid. According to the Old Testament, (cf II Samuel 7), although God would meet with His people in the tabernacle and later in the temple, yet He could never be confined to these structures. For this reason, although we need beautiful church buildings here in Africa, yet we dont need to stereotype the Western church buildings, with red carpets at the centre, a huge pulpit and balcany area and several crosses at the pulpit area and others by the door sides. Craving for these kinds of structures has led some Churches here in Africa to compromise with the world by seeking money for building from rich non-Christians. In some cases, too much effort is being spent in building cathedral-type buildings to the extent of failing to excell in the primary tasks of evangelism and mission. The Church in Africa should be warned against taking pride in buildings. The building of spiritually mature Christians must be the focus of best workmanship and the cause of our highest satisfaction.

What about Church music?

Western Christian music has made a deep and valuable contibution to African Christian worship. But African Christianity cannot be content to simply borrow the praise of the West. The Church in Africa should explore her potential for creative praise. For example, in the area of musical instruments, the African Church should combine Western instruments such as guitar, accordion, piano, trumpet with the African drums, horns etc. For many years, the Church in Africa has relied on and used Western composed hymns. It is high time for African Christians with musical talents to begin composing their own music. At the same time, it should be observed that 'quality' rather than quantity should be the main point of emphasis. It is not the context of music which matters, but the quality of such music. In other words, African Christian music should be theologically sound and African in tune. Music devoid of sound biblical content may entertain but it cannot edify. African Christian music must find its place alongside Western Christian music in our worship services.

A third area of Western impact on worship is order of service. There is nothing inherently wrong with ritual in Church's worship experience. Order is necessary whether in a

home, school or Church, otherwise the end result will be chaos and confusion. This order should not be merely a human enterprise but it should be coupled with the leading and freedom of the Holy Spirit :

> And so the Church should worship in the freedom that the Spirit gives, but also in a way that is an ordered reflection of the whole truth of the gospel, as we have received it from Jesus Christ. There is no conflict between freedom and order in Christian worship, since the same Spirit is the author of both.[21]

We are not advocating freedom at the expense of order. But freedom must be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and based on the discernible needs of the congregation.

What are some of the dangers of too much ritual in our worship services? One would be externalism without inward reality - people doing the right things, following the prescribed way but without the sincerity of the heart(c.f. Isaiah 29:13; Mt. 21:31). Another danger is the solo performance of the pastor and the selected few rather than being a chorus in which all the members feel like a community and participate together. If the same few people sing most Sundays, if the same few people pray and read and lead prayer in most cases, the body life experience will fade away from the Church. Worship service should be so structured that a wide variety of spiritual gifts are discovered and used to the honour of Christ. This brings up the issue of charismatic worship , an important new element in African Church Worship.

9. **What elements of charismatic worship are attractive to young people and in what ways could all Christian denominations benefit from such approaches to worship? What would be some features to avoid? Why?**

Features of Charismatic Worship

Worship services in some historic denominations in Africa have been described by young people as being "cold", overly formal and too highly structured. As a result a lot of young people have been attracted to the Charismatic movement. In Charismatic worship, the language used seems to make young people quite at home and interested in joining such groups. The language in question involves expressions such as "Praise the Lord", which demands the response, "Amen". This expression is repeated a number of times with the same response. As a result, the whole group gets worked up emotionally. The speaker in using such expressions draws the attention of the entire group. No one can go to sleep or doze in such a service. Another feature of language used in charismatic movement is the designation "brother/ sister". One is reminded of the biblical frequency of such terms and it does underscore the family nature of the Church of Christ. Generally, charismatic worship experiences have a high degree of warmth and love. When one visits the group for the first time one often feels so welcomed

and accepted that one will want to return. Since young people are yearning for love and acceptance, they would feel more at home in charismatic worship experience than in the main line Christian denominations. Cases are known that when one has a need, others in the same movement rally to meet that need whatever its nature. In some of our denominations, it seems that emphasis has been laid on mechanical organization of the Church rather than body-life. Charismatic worship is further characterized by clapping of hands, vigorous singing, jumping and other bodily movements. This type of experience has great impact on young people in Africa today. One of the characteristics of many young people is a love of variety and a distaste for monotony. Thus, in the cases where they are stirred up emotionally, they feel free to participate. They feel free to sing and to share their testimonies without reserve. This has a relaxing psychological effect on the young people. The tensions of daily life dissolve. Praying for the sick, speaking in tongues, exorcising demons and spontaneous sermons are additional features of charismatic worship.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Charismatic worship

Charismatic worship addresses itself to the important need to accept people and show them love for Christ's sake. Historic churches should be encouraged to learn this principle of 'building one another up' through love and fellowship. People are more important than programs. We must allow the Holy Spirit to break through our structures, believing that He will lead us with order and not chaos.

But there are certain danger areas as well. One of the dangers to be avoided is the emphasis on experience with very little bible content. Christian life must be backed up by Scripture because emotionalism is temporary. We walk by faith not feeling. There is also the danger of being presumptuous about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not work in a vacuum but through human instrumentality. In the case of preaching, there is need for theological training as well as personal preparation before one preaches. Man is responsible and he should endeavour to do his part and allow the Holy Spirit to do His.

Another danger to be avoided is an over reaction against structure and set forms in worship services. Although structure can be rigid and mechanical, yet it should be observed that worship services without order and harmony can be chaotic and confusing. Prejudice is a final danger to be avoided. For example, some people within the charismatic movement adopt a "holier than thou" attitude. Such an attitude leads some to openly rebuke other Christians and accuse them of being demon possessed. The Charismatic movement has brought renewal and refreshment to African Churches bound in the ruts of traditionalism but discernment is needed in choosing the movements strengths while avoiding its weaknesses.

10. **As we examine our own life and walk with the Lord, what areas are "living sacrifices to God"? What areas have been difficult to give over to Him and His glory? What steps can the concerned Christian take to make more of his life, even the so-called secular areas of his life, more of a true expression of worship to God?**

Six areas loom large as we consider applying the truths about worship to our lives and churches. Since our worship must be a way of life it needs to break out of the sanctuary and spill into the streets.

We are not our Own

We should not finalize our plans as if we owned the future. Many have been greatly helped by a verse in Proverbs 16:9 which reads "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." As one meditates on the above passage, it becomes clear that one cannot plot his life on a graph. Rather, one should allow God to direct one's ways though there is man's part to play by being obedient to the divine counsel.

Who owns our Possessions?

Another area of our life as the working and worshipping Church which must be turned over to God is that of material possessions. Have we learned that God owns everything (c.f. Romans 11:33-36)? As such, we should not find it difficult to give a portion of what rightly belongs to Him. This is especially true in the matter of giving concerning which the Scripture clearly teaches that a portion of all my possessions should be given to God (c.f. Malachi 3:7-10). In addition, the scripture commands us to be generous to others and hospitable (Hebrews 13:2).

Daily Worship

One other area in which God calls His Church to obedience is in daily Bible Study and prayer. As we daily wait upon the Lord and feed on His word, our lives are transformed day by day. This is not an easy thing to do however, since there are many obstacles along the way such as: laziness, disturbances by other commitments etc. With all that, God looks for us to come before Him daily for renewal, guidance and communion.

God's Family and Human Families

We all derive great joy from our families. To be the worshipping Church means to bring the worship of God into our homes. Some find the family altar enriching their family life as they search the Scriptures and pray together. Of special significance has been serving the Lord in sharing the Christian

love with the many guests who come to our homes. Moreover, as a family, we need to share material blessings with needy Christians. As we rightly remove any sacred aura we may mistakenly place on church building--let us wrap that same aura around our homes.

Worshiping in Spirit and Truth

One of the most difficult areas of life to give over to God is our thought life. This is especially true in the sense that we find it hard to keep thinking on the virtues outlined for us in Philippians 4:8. We find roadblocks which Satan places before us. Our minds stray. Wild thoughts wander through. The words of God may seem remote or irrelevant. Yet mastery of the mind is a crucial part of our worship as the Church. Letting our thoughts be made captive to the word of God is possible with God's help.

Should we take seriously Jesus words in Matthew 12:35-37 in which He contrasts the good man and evil one, from the point of view of speech? Gossip and slander can destroy the work and worship of the Church as it destroys Christians and divides the family of God. Speaking the truth in love is our rule.

What steps can we take to be the Church moment by moment?

One step to take is first to surrender one's life fully to Christ. There is no substitute in Christian life for a life completely given over to Christ. This affects the entire life and lifestyle including one's job, finances, material possessions, worship etc. Based on the above step, one ought to be a doer rather than a mere listener of the Word. Thus obedience to Christ is of paramount importance. This comes about as one practises the word he knows. Many professing Christians are faced with the issue of blending theory and practice. We need to be encouraged that it is not enough only to read the scriptures, but that we need to do what it says. To be the true working and worshiping Church demands no less.

Notes

[1] **A.E.A.M. 4th General Assembly**, (Malawi Evangel Publishing House, 1984) 283.

[2] John Stott, "The Christian Contribution to Nation Building". EAJET 3.2 (1984) 52.

[3] John Stott, 53.

[4] George E. Sweazy. **Effective Evangelism** (New York; Harper & Brothers, 1953), 20.

[5] R. Kelley, ed.,**Eerdmans Handbook of Christian Belief**, (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1982) 466.

[6] Bruce Shelley, **The Church: God's people** (Wheaton: Victor Books 1978) 113.

[7] E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, **Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians** (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 100.

[8] William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary Exposition of Ephesians** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1967), 204.

[9] William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957) 246.

[10] Shelley, 115.

[11] Shelley, 115.

[12] Cf. Byang H. Kato, **Theological Pitfalls in Africa**, (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975) 169 ff.

[13] Hans Kung **The Church**, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) 378.

[14] Kung, 379.

[15] Quoted in Tokunboh Adeyemo, **Salvation in African Tradition** (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House 1979) 35.

[16] John S. Mbiti, **Concepts of God in Africa** (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 179.

[17] Kwesi A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth eds. **Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs** (New York: Orbis Books 1969) 168.

[18] Adeyemo, 134.

[19] Lloyd M. Perry and Calvin B. Hanson **Romans: A Model for Bible Study Methods** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982) 163.

[20] Leon Morris, **The Gospel According to John** (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1971) 267.

[21] **Eerdmans Handbook of Christian Belief**, 372.