

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ajet-02.php

Volume 14.2 1995

Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology



-
- 43 **Editorial** *Who Needs AJET?*
- 45 **Watson Omulokoli** *Foundational History of the Africa Inland Church, 1895-1903*
- 55 **Julius Muthengi** *Polygamy and the Church in Africa: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives*
- 79 **A. M. Okorie** *African Widowhood Practices: The Igbo Mourning Experience*
- 85 **Richard J. Gehman** *Will The African Ancestors be Saved?*
- 99 **E.M. Uka** *Practical Theology and Mission: A Case of Sexual Abuse of Children and the Challenge of Evangelism*
-

AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

Consulting Editors:

Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, AEA General Secretary, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr. Victor Cole, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr. Titus Kivunzi, Bishop, Africa Inland Church, Kenya

Rev. Isaac Simbiri, General Secretary, Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya

Dr. Josephat Yego, Deputy Principal (Administration), Jomo Kenyatta University College of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya.

Editorial Committee: Julius Muthengi, Jacob Kibor, Henry Mutua, Richard Gehman (Managing Editor), Paul Bowers (Book Reviews), Mark Shaw (Consultant).

Subscription Services: Claudia Leonard, Christine Mumo

Editorial Assistants: Flo Gehman, Jim Leonard

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

Editorial Policy: We welcome previously unpublished articles and book reviews from an evangelical perspective. Material should be typed, with endnotes, and submitted to: The Editor, *AJET*, PO Box 49, Machakos, Kenya. Please include address on all manuscripts. We regret that manuscripts cannot be returned.

Subscriptions:

Annual rates (rates for two-year subscriptions supplied on request)

Kenya (surface): Ksh 250/

Africa (airmail): US\$12

Europe (airmail): US\$15

Americas, Far East, Aus/NZ (airmail) US\$18

Back Issues: Kenya Ksh 80/; Africa US\$6; Europe US\$7; USA etc. US\$8 (including airmail postage). Orders, renewals, and changes of address should be directed to: *AJET* Subscriptions, PO Box 49, Machakos, Kenya.

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

AJET is indexed in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available on line in the ATLA Religion Database through BRS Information Technologies (Latham NY), and *DIALOG Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). *AJET* is also indexed in *New Testament Abstracts* (Cambridge MA). The opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or sponsors.

Who Needs AJET?

An AJET Editorial

The editorial staff of AJET has experienced some embarrassing problems in the past few years. Two years ago the newly appointed Assistant Editor became seriously sick and has been incapacitated ever since. Last year the Managing Editor transferred to a new ministry. As a result, the publication of AJET has fallen way behind. With pressure of many responsibilities we at Scott Theological College have asked the question, "Who needs AJET?" Is this an important priority of the College Staff among all the many other pressing demands?

The newly appointed Managing Editor together with the Editorial Committee have concluded that AJET is indeed an important contribution to theological education in Africa for many reasons.

AJET facilitates theological reflection and research by evangelicals on theological issues throughout the continent of Africa. Many scholars, from all over the continent of Africa and beyond look to AJET to publish their research writings. Recent issues of AJET contain articles and book reviews by scholars in universities and theological colleges in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Nigeria, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Central African Republic and the United States. It is important that AJET continue to serve the African evangelical theologians desiring to publish their research.

More important is the need to encourage budding and seasoned theologians to reflect more deeply on the Scriptures and develop a biblical approach to the many challenges facing the Christian Church. To some limited degree, AJET has facilitated interaction by scholars on critical issues, such as the question, "How do we develop an African Christian Theology?"

But we have only begun this challenge. Back in February 1986 a special seminar convened in Nairobi with various key leaders from the Africa Inland Church to consider challenges and needs in the A.I.C. which required a biblical resolution. These challenges included: baptism of polygamists, inadequate worship in churches, breakdown of marriages, witchcraft, lack of biblical knowledge of the laity, legalism, gap between the leaders (clergy and elders) and the laity, funeral services, female and male circumcision, baptism and communion, family planning and birth control, fund raising, dreams, church discipline, accountability of money, misconception of spiritual authority - and the list goes on. These are only some of the problems of one Protestant Church in

one nation of Africa. There must be hundreds of challenges which confront the African Christian Church.

The purpose of AJET is to encourage scholars to research deeply into the Scriptures, in libraries and in the field in order to assist the African Church to move into the next millennium, renewed and vibrant, full of the knowledge of God's will for his people. AJET is needed to assist in these efforts.

AJET is also needed to provide students in universities, theological colleges and seminaries with current thinking by evangelical men and women. A lecturer in one theological seminary recently declared that AJET had saved the day for some of their students who needed resources on a particular topic. AJET provided this resource for them. AJET publishes theological reflection on a variety of topics: African traditional issues which continue to disturb the Christian Church, contemporary challenges arising out of changing African society, accounts of church history, Christian Education and much more.

We believe that a renewed and actively published AJET will provide all thinking Christians in Africa with thought provoking articles. We invite you to read the stimulating articles in this issue. We also encourage you to renew your subscription for AJET and encourage others to do the same. Your scholarly articles are also welcomed.

Contributors to this Issue

- Professor Watson A. O. Omulokoli is chaplain at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Rev. Dr. Julius K. Muthengi is Acting Principal of Scott Theological College in Kenya.
- Rev. Dr. A.M. Okorie is lecturer in the University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Rev. Dr. Richard J. Gehman is lecturer in Scott Theological College and the Coordinator of the Theological Advisory Group (TAG).
- Dr. E.M. Uka is lecturer in the University of Calabar in Nigeria.
- Dr. Ernst R. Wendland is lecturer in the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia.

FOUNDATIONAL HISTORY OF THE AFRICA INLAND CHURCH, 1895-1903

Watson A.O. Omulokoli

One hundred years ago on October 27, 1895, Peter Cameron Scott, the founding director of the Africa Inland Mission, first landed in Mombasa in British East Africa, now Kenya. Because of insecurity in the interior, a military escort under a European officer, together with three hundred men and forty-two camels, the first missionary party trekked for two weeks into the interior. The compelling vision of the Africa Inland Mission was to bypass the coastal strip of British East Africa where other missions had begun a work, and penetrate into the interior of East Africa with a chain of mission stations from Mombasa to Lake Chad. From that valiant beginning the A.I.M. International has spread like a fruit vine throughout East, Central and Southern Africa. During this centennial year of the Africa Inland Church, Kenya, it is fitting that Dr. Omulokoli should recount those difficult years which formed the foundational history of the Africa Inland Church Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

The Africa Inland Church (AIC) was born out of the missionary efforts of the Africa Inland Mission (AIM). The AIM, in turn, started its work in Kenya in 1895 under its founder, Peter Cameron Scott. Its initial base was among the Kamba in the present Eastern Province of Kenya. Here, in the initial period of 1895-1901, the Mission experienced a lot of hardships and difficulties, including the loss, through death, sickness, and resignations of almost the entire missionary force.

When the personnel situation began to stabilise at the turn of the century, the operational headquarters of the Mission were moved in 1903 from Kangundo, among the Kamba, to Kijabe, on the border of the Kikuyu and the Maasai. It is from here that the establishment, expansion, and growth of the AIM was directed in subsequent years. The result was that by the time the AIM handed over its work to the AIC as an indigenous entity, the membership spanned the entire country, with a strong presence in widely - scattered regions and ethnic groups of Kenya. Indeed, at the moment the AIC distinguishes itself as a prominent and powerful ecclesiastical unit which ranks numerically among the five largest denominations in the country.

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF THE FOUNDER

Peter Cameron Scott was born on 7th March, 1867, of a devoted Christian family in Glasgow, Scotland.ⁱ When Peter was still young, the family migrated to the United States of America, where they settled at Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. By this time, one of Peter's sisters had died, and so, her grave was one of the main things the family left in Scotland. Peter had a good singing voice, and as he grew up, he began to show interest in becoming a professional singer. Because of the type of lifestyle which was connected with that career and since it seemed to be looked at negatively in strict Christian circles, his parents opposed this idea.ⁱⁱ After being dissuaded by his parents from taking up a professional singing career, Peter ended up in settling for a printing job.

At the age of twenty, when he was working as a printer his health broke down. His doctor advised him that a change of climate would help improve his health, and in this connection, he recommended that he should go back to Scotland to help his health to recover. When Peter was in Scotland, one of the things he did was to visit his sister's grave in Glasgow. As he stood by the grave, he began thinking about the possibility of his own death. This led him to dedicate his life to Jesus Christ as he promised that if God would spare his life, he would serve Him faithfully from then onwards.

God helped him, and as his health improved, he returned to America. When he was recovering and feeling healthy once more, he forgot his contract with God and tried to control his own life. On one occasion, he tried to join an opera as one of the chorus singers, and it was then that he was reminded in his heart about the promise he had made to God when he was ill. This experience drove him to a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ as he rededicated his life to God. From this time on, he began to grow in his spiritual zeal and at the same time his health improved so much that he recovered fully.

SCOTT'S INITIAL MISSIONARY INVOLVEMENT

As Peter continued to grow in the Christian faith, he found himself getting interested in going to Africa to work there as a missionary. As this interest in the missionary vocation increased, he joined the New York Missionary Training College in New York to receive the necessary training. While still in college he decided to spend some three weeks in prayer in order to be clear about the interest which he was experiencing in going to missionary work in Africa. This helped, and after it became obvious to him that this was what God wanted him to do, he wrote to his parents, seeking their consent in this matter. It was really reassuring when they wrote back positively, encouraging him to go ahead and follow God's will for his life.

When he was now ready, he was accepted by the International Missionary Alliance as one of its missionaries and was assigned to its sphere of work on the western coast of central Africa.ⁱⁱⁱ When all the preparations were complete, Peter Cameron Scott was ordained by the Rev. A. B. Simpson in November, 1890, in New York.^{iv} The following day, he sailed out of New York, accompanied by his mother up to London.

On 31st January, 1891, Peter arrived in the intended territory on the western coast of central Africa, landing at Banana at the mouth of the Congo River. From there he proceeded into the interior where the International Missionary Alliance was working. A few months after his arrival, Peter was joined by his brother in these missionary endeavours. Before long his brother died, while Peter himself was in poor health. He finally had to return home, without accomplishing much in his brief stint as a missionary in the Congo.^v

THE FOUNDING OF THE AFRICA INLAND MISSION

On his way back to America after the short stay in the Congo, Peter travelled through England where he spent some time in London, with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Brodie. During his stay there, he came across others who were engaged in the missionary enterprise. On one occasion, he met new recruits who were going out to missionary work. On another occasion, he attended a prayer meeting organised by the China Inland Mission. These, and similar experiences, helped him maintain his interest in and vision for missionary work.

While he was still in London, his health became worse, and so he broke down physically. This meant that he had to stay with the Brodies longer to recover, instead of proceeding to America. During this period of recovery, there was a time when he went to the Westminster Abbey for a tour. When he came to the tomb of Dr. David Livingstone, he knelt there and prayed in meditation. Somehow, despite his illness, his interest in going back to Africa as a missionary had not faded. As his thoughts went back to Africa, he dedicated himself anew to missionary efforts there. In this period, he conceived of the ideas of a chain of mission stations stretching from the coast in East Africa to Lake Chad in the central parts of Africa.^{vi} These thoughts eventually led to the formation of a missionary society which was to serve as the vehicle through which to accomplish this scheme. Indeed it was after this renewal of his missionary zeal and vision that Peter Cameron Scott returned to America, determined to start a new missionary organisation for missionary work in Africa.

As Peter Cameron Scott went around sharing his projections with various Christians in America, a lot of interest was shown in the proposed missionary scheme. One of those who gave him much encouragement when he

shared with him about the plans was Dr. A.T. Pierson, one of the leading American missionary statesmen of the day. With this kind of moral boost, he progressed to the point at which in 1895, he had enough support to launch a new missionary society, the Africa Inland Mission (AIM).^{vii} Prominently involved in these early arrangements was the Rev. Charles E. Hurlburt, a man who was later to serve as the General Superintendent of the Mission. Despite the hard economic times in which the AIM was born, its committee members were determined that the enterprise should get off the ground on a strong and sound note.

One of the areas that the organisers worked hard on in these initial stages was the operational philosophy of the Mission. From its very inception, it was made clear that the key would be to depend on God to supply and proved all that was needed in all that was undertaken.^{viii} The basic promise was that if the whole enterprise was under God's direction, then He would ensure that the financial, material, and human needs of the Mission were fully supplied. What this involved was that,

The whole project was committed to God in prayer. Resting on the promises of God, they looked to Him alone. No appeals for money were made, nor any debt incurred. The decision to adopt this principle was made after much thought and prayer. It has been a governing principle of the Mission ever since. There have been times of shortage, but there has never been a time when God has failed to fulfil His promise.^{ix}

TRAVELLING TO THE MISSIONARY FIELD

Following prayer and concerted effort, enough people were recruited to go out as the first AIM missionaries to Kenya. Included in this pioneer group were the founder of the Mission, Peter Cameron Scott, and his sister, Margaret Scott. Together with them were three other men, Mr. Fred W. Kreiger, Mr. Lester Severn, and Mr. Willis R. Hotchkiss, as well as two other ladies, Miss Minnie Lindberg, and Miss Bertha Reckling.^x When all the arrangements were ready, the farewell service for this group of seven missionaries was held in August, 1895, at the Pennsylvania Bible Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the USA. During this occasion, this same place, the Bible Institute, was dedicated to serve as the headquarters of the new Mission.

From Philadelphia, the missionary party travelled to New York, from where they finally sailed off to Kenya. On their way, they stopped in Scotland where they were able to generate considerable support for the Mission and its work. Here, their number increased when they were joined by Captain Walter McClellan Wilson, bringing the total in the group to eight^t, with five of them men.

While in Scotland, they organised themselves and chose leaders for this team in the field. The Superintendent was Peter Cameron Scott, the Assistant Superintendent was Fred Kreiger, Willis R. Hotchkiss became the Secretary, and Miss Margaret Scott was to serve as the Treasurer.^{xi}

Peter and Margaret's mother, Mrs. Scott accompanied the group up to Paris. When they were about to part there, word reached them that another of Peter's brothers, George, had died at home in the USA. As the missionary party travelled on, while Peter's mother returned to the USA, she responded to this sad news with a very drastic decision. She felt that through this new crisis, God may be indicating that upon her return to America, the rest of the Scott family members should join the Mission and go to Kenya as well. Indeed, in later years, they were able to live up to this resolve by going to Kenya as AIM missionaries.

BEGINNINGS IN KENYA

When they arrived in East Africa, they first went to the main terminus at Zanzibar before moving on to Mombasa. During their one-week lay over at Zanzibar, a German captain of a coastal vessel gave them warm hospitality on his ship. When the time to move on came, Mr. Scott and Mr. Kreiger went to Mombasa on 27th October, 1895, ahead of the rest of the group, in order to make detailed arrangements for the missionary team. Two days later, the rest followed. At Mombasa, they were well received by the staff of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), being accommodated on its mission station at Freretown.

At the time that they were ready to move into the interior, there was some insecurity on the outskirts of Mombasa in the intervening area leading to their destination. This being the case, it was only the five men who went into the interior, moving under the routine military escort for caravans, until they had gone through the danger zone. They left Mombasa on 12th November, 1895, with the three ladies remaining behind at the CMS mission station for the time being.^{xii} On 29th November, the five men arrived at the East Africa Scottish Mission (EASM) station at Kibwezi.^{xiii} Because quite a number of the group were sick from malaria, they remained there for eight days before moving on. From Kibwezi, the missionary team travelled on into the interior of Kambaland, arriving at Nzawi, about 250 miles from Mombasa on 12th December, 1895. It was here that they decided to settle and start their first mission station. Accordingly, the first step they took was to build a house for their own accommodation before embarking on anything else.

While the other four men remained at Nzawi to continue with the process of settling down, Peter Scott went back to Mombasa to help lead the ladies to Ukambani. On reaching Mombasa, he found that one of the ladies, Miss Bertha Reckling, had to return to the USA. He made plans for her voyage home and saw her off on 2nd February, 1896. By then a brick house which was under construction was complete. This meant that at the end of February, 1896, there was a team of seven, five men and two ladies, at the AIM mission station at Nzawi.

The AIM was forward-looking in that efforts were made early to spread out as much as possible. It was in this connection that in March, 1896, a new station was opened at Sakai, and Hotchkiss was assigned there as the missionary in charge.^{xiv} Less than a month later, a third station was opened at Kilungu, with Kreiger posted to work there. Then in September, 1896, new recruits arrived, among them Peter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Scott, and his sister, Inez. The others were Rev. and Miss. Thomas Allan, Mr. Jacob Toole, and Mr. John W. Codd, as well as Miss Edwards, a lady from Scotland. In the case of the Scott family, their number was now five members out of the total group of 15 at the time. With this increased manpower, it was now possible and important to open more stations to which missionaries would be posted. In this connection, in addition to Nzawi, Sakai, and Kilungu, it was now possible to open a new station at Kangundo, bringing the total then to four.^{xv}

Just when all seemed to be going well, disaster struck towards the end of 1896. First, on 4th December, 1896, the leader of the missionary team, Peter Cameron Scott, died of black-water fever at Nzawi, where he was buried.^{xvi} Peter's death had a serious destabilising impact on the missionary personnel. Following his death, the remaining missionary force was so immensely demoralised that- within the period of one year, they were scattered due to different reasons. Most of them returned home because of ill-health, but a few others resigned from the Mission and took up work elsewhere, either with the government, or with private agencies.^{xvii} In the latter category, a case in point was that of the Mission's Assistant Superintendent, Fred Kreiger, who resigned from the AIM in order to start another missionary enterprise among the Kikuyu to the west.^{xviii}

DEPLETION OF THE MISSIONARY FORCE

Out of the 14 members of staff who remained after Peter's death, only six were still with the Mission by December, 1897. These were, the Rev. and Mrs. Thomas Allan, Miss Minnie Lindberg, Mr. Lester Severn, Mr. Jacob Toole, and Mr. Willis Hotchkiss. Even this small group was systematically depleted over the next few months. It started with Mr. Toole, who was ill and had to return

to his home in Canada, but on his way to Mombasa, he died on 31st January, 1898, and was buried near where the Mombasa-Nairobi road meets the Tsavo River. Next, in February of that same year, Mr. Severn left for the USA, and on 4th March, 1898, Rev. Thomas Allan died.

This sad course of events left only three people in the work of the AIM. These were, Mr. Hotchkiss, Mrs. Allan, and Miss Lindberg, but all was not well as both the two ladies were ill, and in consequence of this, weak. After a decision was reached that they should return to America on account of ill-health, Hotchkiss left with them on 6th March, to take them to Mombasa from where they would sail homeward. On this occasion, as he faced the frightening prospects of being left alone, he wrote to the home committee of the Mission in the USA, expressing his trepidation, but at the same time asserting his determination to press on with the work, even although alone.^{xix} With the departure of the two ladies, the only member of the Mission remaining at his post in Kenya was Mr. Willis R. Hotchkiss, and as was later pointed out, "and he represented all that was left of the AIM in Africa".^{xx}

As the number of missionaries decreased, the work was so adversely affected that due to lack of personnel, the missionary stations were closed down one by one until in the end, the only one remaining was that at Kangundo. The first station to be closed was the one at Sakai, in September, 1897, when Hotchkiss moved to Kilungu, with six missionaries left in the field. Then, when Rev. Allan died at Nzawi, that station was closed down, and the two ladies, Mrs. Allan and Miss Lindberg transferred to Kilungu to join Hotchkiss there. After seeing the ladies off at Mombasa, he returned to Ukambani, settled at Kangundo, and eventually abandoned Kilungu.^{xxi}

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION

Hotchkiss was alone from March, 1898, to November of the same year, when two new arrivals joined him. These were, Mr. Charles E. Hurlburt, the new General Director of the Mission, and Mr. William C. Bangert. While Hurlburt had only come for a few months to assess the work, Bangert had come to stay.^{xxii} In May, 1899, Hotchkiss resigned from the AIM, intending to return to America to organise a Mission to Kenya by his own denomination, the Friends Church. To this end, he departed from Kangundo, the sole remaining AIM mission station, on 29th June, 1899, and returned to America.^{xxiii} This left Bangert as the only AIM missionary to Kenya until reinforcements arrived later that year. This Hotchkiss-Bangert era was a transitional period, separating the beginning uncertain and trying years of the past from the more settled, sure and prosperous years ahead.

The period which Hotchkiss and Bangert remained isolated in the Mission both individually and jointly, was one of the most trying for the people of the central parts of Kenya. From some time in the year 1897, to the early part of 1900, a combination of drought, famine, rinderpest, and smallpox descended on the region, all in epidemic proportions.^{xiv} In the same way in which Hotchkiss had served alone earlier, Bangert was on his own from the time of the departure of Hotchkiss in June, 1899. The situation improved in October, 1899, when he was joined by two new people, Mr. C.F. Johnston and Mr. Elmer Bartholomew.

Because Bangert's health was failing, as soon as Johnston and Bartholomew were settled and established in the work, it was arranged that Bangert should return to the USA. In later years, although he desired to go back to Kenya, he was not allowed to since his health problems persisted. Around the same time that Bangert left for the USA, Mr. Lester Severn, who was in the original group of 1895, but who had gone back to the USA in 1898 due to ill-health, now returned to Kenya, this time in the capacity of Field Superintendent. As the effects of the famine continued to be felt, many children were left without parents and became orphans. To help alleviate the suffering of these children, the three bachelors, Severn, Johnston and Bartholomew started an orphanage where they were soon in charge of 25 orphans.

REINFORCEMENTS AND TRANSFER TO KIJABE

The earlier perseverance of Hotchkiss and Bangert, in turns, paid off when the missionary staff level improved considerably in 1901. Already by then, the Mission had Severn, Johnston, and Bartholomew. Now, those arriving included Hurlburt's family of seven, together with Rev. and Mrs. Lee H. Downing, Miss Emily Messenger, and Dr. John Henderson. They travelled by railway from Mombasa and disembarked at Athi River. From there, they walked to the headquarters of the Mission at Kangundo, where they arrived by the Christmas of 1901. This meant that since 1897, this was the first time that the number of the missionary staff had exceeded six, and yet, there were more on the way. Although he visited Kenya briefly in 1898, and finally came there to stay in 1901, Hurlburt was the General Director of the AIM since 1897, and remained in that capacity until 1925.

Once the Mission and its work stabilised following the arrival of the large group of 1901, two issues occupied the attention of the Mission's leadership. One of these was the need to open new stations and expand once more. The other was that of finding a more suitable location than Kangundo for establishing the headquarters of the Mission. Among the issues which featured prominently in this search was that of the overall accessibility and the allied nearness to

communication facilities. It was on this score that Kangundo was ruled out since it was about twenty-nine miles away from the railway line.

When the final decision was made, it was Kijabe, about 7,000 feet high, and to the west of Nairobi, which was chosen, largely because of its proximity to the railway line. With the decision made, Hurlburt moved there in early July, 1903, and was joined there by his family on 10th August. Towards the end of that same month, two new recruits, John Stauffacher and George Rhoad arrived at Kijabe. By this time, plans were already underway for an AIM missionary staff conference. Stauffacher and Rhoad worked hard to help Hurlburt to prepare for this first Kijabe missionary conference which took place on September 10-13, 1903.^{xxv} In a sense, it heralded the new era of progress, expansion, and stability in the AIM.^{xxvi}

END NOTES

ⁱ Kenneth Richardson, *Garden of Miracles: A History of the Africa Inland Mission* (London: Victory Press, 1968), 21. For this section, this paper has relied heavily on Richardson.

ⁱⁱ *IBID.* In some quarters at that time, professional singing was associated with loose-living, hence prone to sinful tendencies.

ⁱⁱⁱ C.P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, Vol. 3, 1878-1914 (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964 Reprint), 119-120. The International Missionary Alliance was then working in the Congo. Later, when the Christian and Missionary Alliance emerged, it took over this work.

^{iv} *IBID.* Also Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, Vol. 5, *The Great Century in the Americas, Australasia, and Africa, 1800-1914*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943) 425-426. A.B. Simpson was at the centre of these missionary endeavours.

^v Latourette, 5:405.

^{vi} J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours*. (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1860) 109-111. This proposal of a chain of mission stations by Scott, (Richardson, 26), was reminiscent of Krapf's thoughts on the matter fifty years earlier.

^{vii} Latourette, 5:405. It is rightly pointed out here that Peter Cameron Scott was the founder of the AIM.

^{viii} Robert Hall Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions* (New York: Harper and Row, 1939; reprint, J. Herbert Kane, ed., 1960), 326. The AIM is a prime example of a body which is known as "faith mission".

^{ix} Richardson, 27.

^x Burnette C. Fish and Gerald W. Fish, *Place of Songs: A History of the World Gospel Mission and the African Gospel Church* (Nakuru, Kenya: World Gospel Mission, 1989), 13.

^{xi} *IBID* 11.

^{xii} Gladys Stauffacher, *Faster Beats the Drum* (Pearl River, New York: Africa Inland Mission, 1978), 18.

^{xiii} Watson Omulokoli, "The Roots of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa: The East Africa Scottish Mission, 1889-1901", Unpublished typescript, 1996. The station at Kibwezi belonged to the East Africa Scottish Mission and not to the Church of England (Fish and Fish, 14) or to the Church of Scotland Mission (Stauffacher, 19).

^{xiv} Willis R. Hotchkiss, *Then and Now in Kenya Colony: Forty Adventurous Years in East Africa* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1937), 50.

^{xv} Stauffacher, 20.

^{xvi} Richardson, 36. The body was later transferred by Peter's parents for reburial at Nairobi.

^{xvii} Horace R.A. Philip. *A New Day in Kenya* (London: World Dominion Press, 1936), 16-17. One of these, Walter McClellan Wilson, married Margaret Scott and followed his resignation from the AIM with a distinguished career as a government Official, businessman, farmer, and influential politician who serve in the Legislative Council and the Governor's Executive Council. Another, Inez Scott, was married by Mr. John Ainsworth, the Chief Native Commissioner of the country (Hotchkiss, 70- 71). Also Richardson, p. 37.

^{xviii} Stauffacher, 21. Also Hotchkiss, 79.

^{xix} Fish and Fish, 19.

^{xx} Stauffacher, 21.

^{xxi} *IBID.*, 20-21. See, Hotchkiss, 55, 70-73.

^{xxii} Some sources put the duration of Hurlburt's stay at two months (Stauffacher, 22), while others six months (Fish and Fish, 20). Whatever the length, this was a research tour in his capacity as the Mission's General Director.

^{xxiii} Hotchkiss, 95. Here Hotchkiss attempts to give a summary of his rationale for switching from the AIM to a new Mission under the Friends Church.

^{xxiv} *IBID*, 46.

^{xxv} Stauffacher, 24.

^{xxvi} Dick Anderson, *We Felt Like Grasshoppers: The Story of Africa Inland Mission*. (Nottingham, Crossway Books, 1994). This is a valuable source, covering a wide area of the account of the AIM.

POLYGAMY AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA: BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

JULIUS K. MUTHENGI

Polygamy has been a persistent problem in Africa for the Christian missions which brought the Gospel to the continent. Much has been written on this subject as evidenced by the extensive bibliography of this article. Though polygamy has been a divisive issue, the early missionary societies were remarkably united on their common approach to polygamy. Since monogamy is the biblical ideal of marriage, the pioneering missions raised a barrier to any polygamist being baptized and admitted into church membership, though the missions readily welcomed them into the Body of Christ. Since independence much new thinking has taken place. As a result the unified approach to polygamy of the earlier day is giving way to modifications. Dr. Muthengi interacts with the literature available, tracing the factors which led to polygamy among the Africans, the biblical data on which churches base their theological beliefs, and the various church positions on polygamy, both past and present.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of polygamy has staged heated debates as it is evidenced by the number of articles and books written on the subject. While polygamy has been practiced by many societies in the world, it has strongly affected sub-Saharan Africa. The issue in question has ethical, theological, pastoral, sociological and missiological ramifications. The aim of this paper is to analyse the issue in the light of the above mentioned perspectives and to offer some practical suggestions.

DEFINITION

The term polygamy comes from two Greek words meaning "many marriages." The word refers to a situation where a man has two or more wives

(technically known as polygyny). The term polyandry is used for marriage situation where a woman has more than one husband. Polygamy is widespread in Africa while polyandry is almost a foreign phenomenon (Shorter 1974:172). Normally, polygamy exists in two forms namely simultaneous polygamy and successive polygamy. The former refers to a situation where the polygamist is living with and supporting two or more wives with their children. The latter situation is one where the husband takes another wife who is in addition to his previous wife or wives. Gradually, the man is no longer living with his previous wife or wives and finally deserts her/them.

Some scholars have offered a wider definition of the term. For instance, Hillman (1975:10) argued that a man may become polygamist when he divorced his wife and married another one. Accordingly, the man in question has two wives because he is engaged in consecutive polygyny. In the case of a woman who forsakes her husband and marries another man, she is involved in consecutive polyandry (Hillman 1975:10).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout the history of the church, the issue of polygamy has been widely disputed among theologians. According to Hillman (1975), Augustine endorsed polygamy. He argued that polygamy was not wrong as long as its purpose was for the multiplication of the race (Barrett 1968:116). Augustine pointedly reasoned that polygamy was not contrary to the law of nature nor to the law of marriage itself.

Thomas Aquinas like Augustine argued that on the basis of natural law, polygamy was not prohibited (Hillman 1975:181). Aquinas therefore endorsed polygamy when he wrote:

A plurality of wives is said to be against the natural law, not as regards its first precepts, but as regards the secondary precepts, which like conclusions are drawn from its first precepts. Since, however, human acts must needs vary according to the various conditions of persons, times, and other circumstances, the aforesaid conclusions do not proceed from the first precepts of the natural law, so as to be binding in all cases, but only in the majority (Hillman 1975:181).

Like Augustine, Aquinas strongly believed that the primary object and purpose of marriage was procreation and bringing up children. Consequently, the purpose in question could legitimately be realised in polygamous situations.

The Protestant reformers manifested a great degree of differing opinions with regard to the issue of polygamy (Barrett 1968; Hillman 1975). For instance, Calvin argued that polygamy was prohibited by natural law and that it hindered domestic peace by creating inferiority complex within each of the wives (Hillman 1975:182). Luther and Melancthon argued that monogamy was not applicable to every situation. They believed that the Mosaic Law sanctioned polygamy. Luther in particular seemed to have it both ways as he claimed that "the Christian was at liberty under the Gospel to have more wives than one" (Barrett 1968:117).

In contradistinction to the reformers view (except that of John Calvin), the council of Trent strongly condemned polygamy. For quite some time there was little discussion on polygamy until the nineteenth century, the era of world wide missionary expansion. According to Harries (1953), Christian missions in Africa espoused a common view on the issue of polygamy. Harries wrote:

On this crucial issue the mission authorities of all denominations have consistently refused to surrender their ground. They have always maintained, and still maintain, that acceptance of polygamy would be fundamentally inconsistent with the teaching of Christianity (Harries 1953:335-336).

In an attempt to enforce monogamy various missions refused to accept polygamists and their families into church fellowship (Barrett 1968:117). The treatment of polygamists differed from one mission organisation to another. Some refused baptism to polygamists while others baptised the wives and children but not the husbands.

The missionary response to polygamy in Africa led to sharp reactions from the Africans (Hunter 1962, 33). Barrett (1968) has given a detailed discussion of the phenomenon in question. Accordingly, the conflict of missions with polygamy had adverse consequences. For example, in one large Nigerian city, many Christians rejected Christianity after a pastor refused to baptise a rich polygamist. Further, Barrett argued that in many parts of Africa, missions made a serious mistake by making hasty judgement on the thorny issue of polygamy (Barrett 1968:117-118). In order to avoid such blunder, missions should have allowed "the indigenous Christian conscience to evolve its own solution" (Barrett 1968:118).

An interesting connection between the missions' response to polygamy and African reaction was evidenced in the mushrooming of Independent Churches in Africa, in the turn of the century. Barrett (1968) has given numerous examples of the phenomenon in question. One example of polygamy

among African Independent churches was Isaiah Shembe, messiah of the Nazarite Baptist church in South Africa, who had four wives. Josiah Oshitelu, founder of the Aladura (Church of the Lord) had seven wives; Johane Maranke, founder of the African Apostolic Church in Zambia and Zimbabwe had sixteen wives before he died in 1963.

Barrett, however, conceded that there were other factors involved in the issue of independence besides polygamy. He cited one example of a separatist group in Kenya where more than one issue was involved in their independence. He, however, strongly argued that missions in Africa interfered with African culture too much (Barrett 1968:118-119). His conclusion is that "separatism emerges in a given tribe as the outcome of clashes between two cultures, the traditional and the missionary."

FACTORS WHICH LED TO POLYGAMY AMONG AFRICANS

Traditionally, polygamy was accepted all over Africa as the cultural norm. It was believed that the chief end of marriage was procreation. The more wives a man had the more would be his children and the more children one had, the longer he would likely be remembered, long after his death (Mbiti 1967:142). Such a man would have many descendants through whom the power of immortality would be manifested in that family (Mbiti 1967). Accordingly, children were the glory of marriage and the more children there were, the greater the glory!

In addition to the point made above, scholars have isolated other factors which encouraged polygamy among African men. First, polygamy is encouraged by failure to produce children which in many cases is thought to be the woman's fault. In such instances, a man decides to marry a second or third wife in order to remedy the situation (Mbiti 1967; Iteka 1981; Gitari 1988; Shorter 1974). Mbiti elaborated on the point as he wrote:

If the first wife has no children, or only daughters, it follows almost without exception that her husband will add another wife, partly to remedy the immediate concern of childlessness, and partly to remove the shame and anxiety of apparent unproductivity. To be productive in terms of having children, is one of the essential attributes of being a mature human being. The more productive a person is, the more he contributes to the existence of society at large (Mbiti 1967:142).

From a traditional African or Kenyan point of view, barrenness is a tragedy that threatens both the family life as well as its future!

Second, polygamy is motivated by desire to secure alliance with good families. In this case, marriage from the African context is viewed as involving families and communities rather than individuals (Hillman 1975:92). Third, the chronological age gap between men and ladies at the time of marriage has been noted as a factor which encourages polygamy. Scholars have argued that in many parts of Africa, men normally get married late in life, thus creating a pool of marriageable women (Hillman 1975).

One should not, however, get the impression that the discrepancy mentioned above is the only factor involved. Hillman (1975) has conceded that other factors at work include the natural annual population increase, the relatively higher mortality rate among the male population. Hanin (1969) elaborated on the issue in question as he wrote:

Women, as a rule, marry at an earlier age than males, so men in the younger age-groups are excluded from the pool of "marriageable" ages. Further, if it is assumed that the number of births is increasing from year to year, then if women aged 15 marry men aged 20, they marry men born five years earlier than their own date of birth. But five years earlier fewer births were occurring. A large difference between the ages at marriage of men and women in a population of high mortality with increasing numbers of births tends greatly to reduce women's chances of marriage in a monogamous society (quoted in Hillman 1975:10-91).

The above viewpoint sounds rather attractive if taken at face value. It seems, however, to be based on the theory that every woman must get married! Further, on what basis should certain African/Kenyan men marry more than one wife while others marry only one?

Fourth, traditionally, polygamy was motivated by economic reasons. Marrying more than one wife and producing several children ensured division of labour. Wives and their children worked in the fields which would enhance productivity. Young men engaged themselves in looking after cattle while the father's duty was to oversee the work force (Yego 1984, 63). It should be emphasised, however, that the economic perspective of polygamy is increasingly losing ground, especially in Kenya. Rearing children is becoming an awesome responsibility. Many rural area families are facing hardship in day to day living and the rain on which they depend is oftentimes unpredictable.

Fifth, polygamy has traditionally been motivated by a desire to care for widows (Mpolo 1987:101). For most African men, it is socially accepted (outside the church, of course), that, the brother or close relative should marry the widow of his brother or cousin in order to preserve the lineage of the departed. Some

African scholars argue that the African practice mentioned above reflects the provision of the Levitical law (Deut. 25:5). Mpolo (1987) has pointed out that the Old Testament describes two women who protected their levirate right, Ruth (Book of Ruth) and Tamar (Gen. 38:6).

Sixth, research indicates that in most parts of Africa, women abstain from sexual intercourse as soon as they know they are pregnant (Mpolo 1987, 1-4). From the time of conception up to birth and at least two to three years thereafter, the woman normally abstains from sexual union. Such a prolonged period of abstinence has in many cases resulted in polygamous situations. It should be pointed out, however, that the above reasoning is not universally accepted even by African scholars. For example, some have argued that there were other factors involved in polygamy besides the desire to satisfy personal sexual appetites (Mpolo 1987).

Seventh, another factor which encourages polygamy among African men is prestige (Iteka 1981:107). In this case, some wealthy men get married to young looking girls in order to show off social status (Gitari 1988:42). Among the Kamba tribe of Kenya (to which the writer belongs), polygamists boast of their younger wife or wives, calling them *katinda ngooni* (literally "one who occupies my heart").

Finally, polygamy is motivated by lust or evil desires. This factor is, however, disputed by scholars who argue that it should not be brought forth in the discussion. For instance, Shorter (1974) wrote:

It is completely wrong to imagine that male lust or male selfishness is the principal motive behind polygamy. Men could satisfy their lust through adulterous unions and concubinage. Polygamy serves the posterity and growth of the extended family and provides status and support for women in societies where they have no vocation other than marriage and the bearing of children to their husband's lineage. (Shorter 1974:173).

It should be pointed out that the status of women in Kenya for example, has changed greatly since the above statements were written. For instance, there are more educated and working women today than there were in 1974. It does not help much to spend time and space trying to justify polygamy. Rather, more time and energy needs to be spent on how the church in Africa/Kenya should deal with polygamous situations, an issue to be dealt with later in the paper.

BIBLICAL DATA

While scholars are not agreed on whether or not the Bible clearly condemns polygamy, one thing is clear that the Old Testament records instances of polygamous situations. Gen. 4:19 records the first known polygamous situation. Lamech had two wives namely, Adah and Zillah. Abraham, although originally married to one wife (Sarah) is also considered a polygamist due to taking Hagar as a concubine. Jacob married two sisters (Gen. 29:23-30) and his wives' maids (Gen. 30:4,9). A cursory look at the rest of the Pentateuch reveals that other polygamous situations existed among the Israelites (Exod. 21:9-11; Deut. 21:15-17).

Other polygamous cases in the Old Testament included Elkanah, Samuel's father (1 Sam. 1:1-2) who had two wives namely, Hannah and Peninnah. King David married many wives and also kept numerous concubines (2 Sam. 5:13). Solomon had the largest number of wives and concubines ever recorded (1 Kings 11:1-3). The prophetic writings, however, emphasized monogamy. They disdained polygamy and used the symbolism of monogamous marriage as the basic relationship between Yahweh and the nation of Israel (Hos. 2:18; Isa. 1:1; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 15:8). The post exilic literature almost without exception indicated that monogamy rather than polygamy was the norm

By the New Testament times, monogamy was considered the normal case, particularly for any man to hold church office (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:16). Earlier, Jesus had used the Old Testament perspective of marriage (Gen. 2:24) to challenge the prevalent view of divorce (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:8). The purpose of this section is to explore whether or not the Bible addressed the issue of polygamy and if so, to what extent? The issue in question has significant implications in the realm of marriage and the family.

Old Testament View of Marriage

Genesis 2:18 tells us that after God created the first man, He said "It is not good for the man to be alone." He therefore decided to create a helper suitable for the man (Gen. 2:20). The woman was man's ideal companion who would complement him at the highest possible level. Eve was not a hired hand but a wonder woman (Kaiser 1983:154). After she was presented to Adam, the man exclaimed, "Now at last, she is bone of my bones (my very own) and flesh of my flesh, she (this one) shall be called Woman" (Gen. 2:23).

The author of Genesis underscored the biblical view of marriage (Gen. 2:24) in the significant words "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." The

idea of man leaving his parents signifies passage to adulthood (Kaiser 1983), while the concept of cleaving indicates the God-sealed bond (Kidner 1967:66). The text points out that husband and wife are no longer two but one entity.

Some scholars have taken the idea of becoming one flesh to mean becoming one family or blood relatives (Holst 1967:206; Parrinder 1958:48). Accordingly, the idea expressed in Genesis 2:24 is similar to that of Genesis 29:14. When Laban saw Jacob, he exclaimed, "You are truly my bone and flesh," meaning 'blood relative.' It should be pointed out that while Holst and Parrinder agreed on their interpretation of what becoming one flesh means, they disagreed on the application of the text. For instance, Holst argued that "becoming one flesh could take place between one man and several wives" (Holst 1967:207). He concluded that the text in question has reference to the indissolubility of marriage, but it does not argue for a monogamous case.

Contrary to Holst, Parrinder categorically argued that:

If, then, a man cannot leave his wife, it is obvious that Jesus would not countenance a man's taking a second wife. This would be sheer adultery. The "one flesh" makes this quite clear. It is not permissible to have two marriage contracts at once, "two flesh". Nor can the unity of man and wife be broken up by the admission of a concubine. "They are no more two, but one flesh," excludes a third party (Parrinder 1958: 48).

As it will be pointed out later, Jesus quoted the Genesis passage in the context of the divorce issue. Nevertheless, He made it clear that He who created mankind in the beginning created them two (husband and wife). For the most part, polygamy should be viewed as human convention rather than God's ideal for marriage. It cannot be denied that the Old Testament records many cases of polygamy. At the same time, a line should be drawn between what the Bible records and what it endorses. Genesis 2, therefore, cannot be used to endorse polygamy. On the contrary, the text is a strong case in point against the practice in question.

Concerning the Mosaic law at large, a question to be explored is whether or not it sanctioned polygamy. Two key passages in connection with the issue are Exodus 21:7-11 and Deuteronomy 21:15-17. Concerning the Exodus passage, the emphasis seems to have been on the lot of the Israelite girls sold into slavery. Scholars are not agreed on whether or not the selling of girls was for the purpose of concubinage or marriage or simply due to poverty (Davies 1967:176), (Fuller 1953:55). The key verse in this text is verse 10, "If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights" (NIV).

The difficulty with the verse in question, however, is that it is not clear whether marrying another wife refers to "instead " of the first one (referring to the refusal to marry the slave girl) or in addition to the first one. If the latter was the case, then no doubt the man was a polygamist. On the other hand, if the text refers to the idea of refusing to marry the slave girl and marrying another woman, there was no polygamy involved. Dwight (1836:16) argued that the Hebrew of verse 10 should be rendered, "If he marry another woman instead of her."

Whatever interpretation one comes up with, it should be emphasized that the text in question is not a strong case either for or against polygamy. Moreover, the passage is in form of casuistic laws rather than apodosis, which means that it does not necessarily sanction polygamy. The former laws were "if" laws, while the latter were stipulations such as "You shall do or not do thus and so!"

The second text (Deut. 21:15-17) emphasize the authority of the Father over his sons (Kline 1963:108), particularly with respect to the rights and privileges of the first-born. The passage points out that in the case of polygamous situations, the first-born son had the rights of inheritance. According to the text in question, the Father's preference could not override the customary law. Von Rad (1966, 138) argued that the custom in question goes back to Genesis 27; 48:14). He noted, however, that the Deuteronomy passage emphasized the concept of the first-born in the biological sense. Such regulation made it difficult for fathers in Israel to make arbitrary choices with regard to the application of the issue in question.

As we conclude the discussion on the foregoing passages, it is important to note that the fact that there were instances of polygamy in the Old Testament does not necessarily mean God's approval of the practice. Contrary to this observation, however, Holst argued that the Old Testament did not view polygamy to be sinful (Holst 1967:209). He concluded, "It is important to note that these laws do not consider polygamy a sin but rather indicate that in polygamous marriage there were sinful practices in which especially wives and children suffered."

New Testament Teaching

Scholars do not agree whether or not the New Testament directly addresses the issue of polygamy. Hillman (1975) denied that the New Testament has any single text relevant in discussing polygamy. He argued as follows:

Polygamy is simply not treated directly and explicitly by the New Testament writers who, quite naturally, under the cultural ethos of their particular time and place in history, accepted monogamy as a normal point of departure for any discussion of marriage (Hillman 1975:139).

Hillman's argument could lead only to one logical conclusion namely, that any claim that the New Testament talks about polygamy may be based on inferences or implications.

Other scholars agree with Hillman that there are no examples of polygamy in the New Testament (Mann 1989:19; Parrinder 1958:44; Trowell 1956:17; Taylor 1964:46). Does it then mean that the New Testament does not address the issue in question? In order to answer the question, it is important to look at some relevant New Testament texts.

One of the texts in question is Matthew 19:4-5. Obviously, Jesus was responding to the Pharisees' disguised question about divorce. According to Jesus, God's ideal was that marriage should be an indissoluble unity (Gen. 2:24). Divorce was only allowed due to the wickedness and deceitfulness of human hearts. Did Jesus condemn polygamy in the text under consideration? According to Vass (1970:259) Jesus did not talk about polygamy, but divorce. The passage Jesus referred to is Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which is concerned only with divorce and remarriage (Vass 1970).

Hillman (1975) argued that:

Since the Lord himself makes no explicit reference to "the problem of polygamy," this whole argument hinges decisively upon the following assumptions: that Genesis evidently depicts monogamy as divinely willed from the beginning and that simultaneous polygyny (customary Jewish polygamy) is intrinsically bound up with divorce and remarriage--hence, also, with adultery. Such assumptions... are highly dubious. Here, therefore, it should suffice to emphasize that the Lord's reply to the Pharisees (cf. Matt. 19:3-9) is limited to the scope of their questions. We need not expect to find here the answer to a question that was not asked (Hillman 1975:155-156).

It seems clear from the foregoing that Hillman denied even the application of Jesus' words to the issue of polygamy.

However one interprets Matthew 19:4-5, one thing should be underscored, that the Genesis passage Jesus quoted supports monogamy rather than polygamy. It would be unthinkable to argue that becoming one flesh

can apply to plural marriages as well as to monogamous marriages. As it was pointed out earlier, it is important to distinguish between what the Bible recorded and what God endorsed.

Other New Testament passages relevant to the discussion on marriage are 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6. The phrase "husband of one wife" found in these texts has presented problems to scholars, leading to various interpretations. Some scholars have argued that Paul's teaching does not condemn polygamy, while others have maintained that the words in question strongly argue against polygamy.

Holst (1967:210-212) has argued that the Greek text of 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 is rather ambiguous. Accordingly, the phrase, "husband of one wife," could be interpreted in four different ways. First, the phrase might mean that church leaders could not be polygamous. Second, the phrase might mean that church leaders could not take a second wife (after the first wife had died or had been divorced). Third, church leaders must be faithful in their monogamous marriage. Fourth, church leaders could not be single men.

After a lengthy discussion of each of the views mentioned above, Holst concluded that the third interpretation was most probable. He argued that a man was expected to be faithful to his wife, given that there was wide-spread adultery in the Hellenistic culture. Moreover, polygamy was not widely practised at the time.

The concept "husband of one wife" was of major concern to church fathers. For instance, Saint Jerome's argument is worth noting. He argued as follows:

The text quoted by the objector, "a bishop must be the husband of one wife," admits of quite another explanation. The apostle came of the Jews and the Primitive Christian church was gathered out of the remnants of Israel. Paul knew that the Law allowed men to have children by several wives, and was aware that the example of the patriarchs had made polygamy familiar to the people. Even the very priests might at their own discretion enjoy the same license. He gave commandment therefore that the priests of the church should not claim this liberty, that they should not take two wives or three together, but that they should each have but one wife at one time (quoted in Hillman 1975: 166).

Other church fathers such as Chrysostom, Theodore of Cyrene and Cardinal Cajetan all echoed Saint Jerome's reasoning (Hillman 1975). The

bottom line of the above argument is that the monogamy rule in the pastoral epistles applied only to the official functionaries of the church, namely bishops, elders and deacons.

Kent (1958:127) argued that polygamy was forbidden in the Roman Empire by Paul's time and that there could be no polygamists in the church. Accordingly, the phrase "husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2) must be taken in the same manner as the phrase "wife of one man" (1 Tim. 5:9). If the former passage condemns polygamy, the latter text should also address the issue of polyandry, since the same Greek expression is used in both cases (Kent 1958). Kent strongly argued that the expression "husband of one wife" does not necessarily condemn polygamy.

Contrary to Kent's views, Calvin (1948:77) argued that the phrase "husband of one wife" in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 clearly condemns polygamy. The issue in question was sinful and was forbidden by God's word to both bishops, elders, deacons and all Christians. The texts in question may be taken to refer primarily to church leaders. At the same time, it should be born in mind that the Genesis 2:24 passage is a strong case against the practice of polygamy by any Christian. It is true that many in the Old Testament practiced polygamy as it was the case with the surrounding nations. At the same time, there should be a clear line drawn between God's requirement (one man, one wife) and man's invention (several wives).

Moreover, Ephesians 5:22-31 underscores the point of union between Christ and His bride, the church, which is by way of covenant love. This state of affairs is most applicable in a monogamous situation rather than in a polygamous context. The emphasis is on the unity of Christ and the church from a singular perspective. Christ loved His church and gave Himself up for it.

VARIOUS CHURCH POSITIONS ON POLYGAMY

Although the cases of polygamy in Africa may be decreasing, the issue is far from disappearing. As the foregoing pages have demonstrated, polygamy in Africa has ethical, theological, pastoral, social and practical implications. In this section, the perspectives outlined above will become even clearer. The aim of this section is to examine the positions held by various church organisations on polygamy as relates to the African scene.

Roman Catholic Church

As far back as A.D. 866, the official Roman Catholic Church view of polygamy became clear. According to Urrutia (1981:276), Pope Nicholas I wrote

"Therefore, if one is found to have two wives at the same time he is to be compelled (*cogatur amittere*) to lose one and keep the first." The position in question has prevailed throughout the centuries. In modern era, however, the issue of polygamy has raised heated debates.

There has been disagreement among some noted Roman Catholic theologians on the polygamy issue. For instance, Urrutia (1981) has consistently supported the official Roman Catholic view on polygamy. He argued:

I can harbour no doubt that the series of magisterial pronouncements, as well as the above recalled constant and uncompromising practice demanded by the church, conveys to us the church's conviction that monogamy, to the exclusion of polygamy, is demanded by our faith. Indeed, the teaching is formal, explicit, unequivocal, constant throughout the centuries, in the face of enormously different cultural situations. And it is a teaching in which church authority is committing itself, either because it is given by ecumenical councils or because the pontiffs invoke their authority. In the face of cultural claims, the teaching is constantly based in a concrete reading of Holy Scripture (Urrutia 1981:280).

Urrutia further argued that the magisterium or official teachers of the Roman Catholic dogma, had divine authority to interpret the Holy Scripture.

The official Roman Catholic documents state that monogamy is dictated by God's revelation (Urrutia 1981:280). Pope John II in his 1980 visit to Zaire and other parts of Africa, clearly reaffirmed that the Roman Catholic view on polygamy has never changed. He viewed polygamy to be in the same category as divorce and abortion (Hillman 1982:166). The Pope argued that:

Polygamy radically contradicted the covenant of married life ("two in one flesh"), so it negates God's plan which was revealed from the beginning, because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive (Hillman 1982:166).

The polygamy debate in the Roman Catholic Church has not been resolved even with words such as those strongly pronounced by John Paul II.

Hillman (1982:166) reported that "the 1981 plenary assembly of the Vatican congregation for the Evangelization of peoples," was at least willing to give the polygamy issue careful thought. Accordingly, the group approached the

issue in a sympathetic manner, due to insights gained from the African context and sociological data available at the time. Hillman's words are worth noting as he wrote:

It is now appreciated more generally that customary plural marriage in Africa is not at all what European theologians and canonists of the past had imagined it to be: merely a matter of primitive male lust, pride and domination found only among peoples who are "uncivilised," "immature" or "undeveloped." Even the writers of Vatican II's document on the church in the modern world had obtusely consigned polygamy, without any distinctions, to the same pejorative category as "the plague of divorce" and so called "free love" (Hillman 1982:166).

According to Hillman, the perspective on polygamy expressed by the plenary assembly of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples is a new point of departure. It showed a keen sensitivity toward African polygamous situations.

The new Roman Catholic perspective was especially expressed by Cardinal Paul Zoungana of Upper Volta as he argued:

It is necessary to see and understand polygamy such as it is, in order to grasp the obstacles that it places in the way of evangelization and conversion; then from there, we can find solutions to bring to the problems which have arisen (Hillman 1982:166).

The cardinal concluded that certain forms of polygamy were legitimate, for example levirate type of polygamy. The problem with such a conclusion, however, is that it opens doors for all types of polygamous situations. The issue at stake is the criteria on which one deems certain forms of polygamy lawful and appropriate while others are not!

Another Roman Catholic scholar disposed toward a tolerance of polygamy was Karl Rahner (Hillman 1982:165). He argued that the African peoples, for example the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, could not reproduce the morality of western Christianity. Rather, they were to live as Maasai Christians, with all the rights of baptism. Rahner's view reflected that of Eugene Hillman which is evident from all his writings on polygamy (including the 1975 classical book, *Polygamy Reconsidered*).

Finally, Bernard Haring was even more persistent on the polygamy issue than Rahner. He categorically argued:

Where polygamy was and unto now is the preferred system, the church has to fight against new forms of polygamy which are socially disapproved and unacceptable. But I suggest that the churches admit to baptism and full participation in the life of the church the polygamous families who find themselves in a socially approved and lawfully contracted marriage of this type when they come to faith. I do not think, however, that the church should allow [its] members who are fully evangelised and baptised to enter into polygamous marriage, although [it] can be temporarily tolerant in exceptional cases such as the levirate, where the woman and the deceased husband's brother cannot refuse it without grave harm to the persons involved, or in a case similar to Abraham's where a man is urged and forced by his environment to take a second wife when the first is sterile (Hillman 1982:161-162).

Haring's argument is rather convincing, especially with respect to baptism of polygamists as well as discouraging Christians or the so called baptised members from entering into polygamy. He, however, like Cardinal Zougrana seemed to relativise the issue by endorsing levirate marriage.

The Lutheran Church in Africa

Generally speaking, the official Lutheran church position has been the endorsement of monogamy, as the biblical norm. However, in 1951, the Lutheran Church in Liberia, West Africa agreed that polygamists and their wives could be admitted to baptism and holy communion (Wick 1978:57). They nevertheless made it clear that those in polygamous situations could not hold church offices.

Recent conferences and consultations among the Lutheran church leadership in Africa, have manifested the significance of the polygamy issue. For example, the 1963 Pan-African Workshop on "The Christian Home and Family Life" held at Mindolo, Zambia discussed the issue at length. They argued that the case of Isaac and Ishmael indicated that God's promise was fulfilled through the former, not the latter. Monogamy was therefore God's intention, since polygamy "denies each person his/her identity as an autonomous individual before God" (Mpolo 1987:114).

In addition to arguing from the Old Testament, the Lutheran conference in question argued from the perspective of history and the New Testament. Accordingly, at ten international meetings of Protestant Missions from 1856 to 1942 at which the subject of polygamy was discussed, there was one conclusion, namely that polygamy was against God's plan for marriage set forth in Scripture (Wick 1978:224).

The 1963 All-African Lutheran conference adopted two major resolutions concerning the issue of polygamy:

- 1) That we affirm that monogamy is God's plan for marriage, that it is the ideal relationship for the expression of love between a man and a woman, and is the proper atmosphere within which to develop a Christian family. The entering into a polygamous marriage by a Christian, whether through the normal channels of giving a dowry, or through inheritance, or gift, is an offence against the laws of the church.
- 2) That it is the responsibility of each church, being guided by the word of God through the Holy Spirit, and being cognizant of the particular time, circumstances and conditions in which it finds itself, to see that way which on the one hand will not weaken her standards of faith and practise in the eyes of the world, and on the other hand, will not arbitrarily place upon some who desire its blessing a burden, the consequences of which may be in opposition to the very message of the gospel (Mpolo 1987:114; Burce 1963:224-225).

The above statements have been criticised by scholars as providing poor pastoral guidelines. For example, Mpolo (1987:114) argued that the Lutheran church was "so caught up in administrative procedures that the development of counselling and therapeutic attitudes within pastoral activities has become a difficult task."

Another conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was held in 1969, in Tanzania, East Africa. The then president of the Southern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania strongly argued:

The church is right in discouraging polygamy among its members. But they are wrong in making monogamy into one of the conditions of baptism and church membership... my plea with the church and mission is that pre-baptism polygamy [should be polygamists] should be baptised together with their wives and children without being forced to divorce their wives. They should also be accepted into full membership. The post-baptism polygamists also should not be excommunicated from church membership because of their wives they married besides the first wife (quoted in Yego 1984:77-78).

The foregoing discussion indicates that polygamy has been a hot issue in the missionary and church work on the soil of Africa. The discussion also

indicates that there has been no precise agreement on the polygamy issue among Lutheran church leadership.

The Anglican Church

Historically, the Anglican Church like any other church organisation has wrestled with the issue of polygamy. In 1862, Bishop Colenso of Natal Province in South African wrote to the bishop of Canterbury, England expressing his reservations with the official Anglican view on polygamy (Gitari 1988:42) Colenso argued:

The conviction has deepened within me that the common practice of requiring a man, who may have more than one wife at the time of his conversion, to put away all but one before he can be received to the Christian baptism, is unwarranted by Scripture, unsanctioned by apostolic example or authority, condemned by common reason and sense of right, and altogether unjustifiable (quoted in Gitari 1988:42).

In spite of such strong argument, Colenso's views did not go deep enough. His words landed on deaf ears because the opposition was too great.

According to Hillman (1975), Colenso never gave up his convictions concerning the Anglican church's insensitive position on polygamy. In 1855, Colenso argued:

I must confess that I feel strongly on this point, that the usual practice of enforcing the separation of wives from their husbands, upon their conversion to Christianity, is quite unwarrantable, and opposed to the plain teaching of our Lord. It is putting new wine in old bottles, and placing a stumbling-block, which He has not set, directly in the way of receiving the Gospel (quoted in Hillman 1975:31-32).

Even with such strong arguments, Colenso failed to carry the day.

In 1860 Colenso persistently made his views known to the rest of the Anglican Church leadership. He continuously reaffirmed his conviction as he once again wrote:

With respect to the polygamy question, all my experience has deepened and confirmed the conviction... that a most grievous error has been committed all along by our Missionary Societies in the course they have been hitherto adopting with regard to native converts who have had

more than one wife at the time of receiving the word of life in the Gospel (quoted in Hillman 1975:32).

Colenso's arguments finally paid off at the third Lambeth Conference in 1888 when the Anglican Church demonstrated sensitivity to the polygamy issue (Gitari 1988:42; Yego 1984:75; Hillman 1975:32).

Although the official Anglican Church position did not change all that much, there was some degree of flexibility. The resolutions were drawn that:

Persons living in polygamy [should] not be admitted to baptism but they be accepted as candidates and kept under Christian instruction until such a time as they shall be in a position to accept the law of Christ (i.e., their 'surplus' wives have died or been divorced (Gitari 1988:42).

According to Yego (1984:75), the above resolution was "unanimously confirmed" at the 1908 Lambeth conference by the committee of foreign missions. Yego further pointed out that the 1888 resolution was finally confirmed during the Lambeth 1920 conference. Accordingly, the Synod of the Anglican Church of Uganda in 1938 accepted native marriage but condemned polygamy.

The issue of polygamy continued to cause heated debates within the Anglican Church in various parts of Africa. Newing (1970:130-141) pointed out that there was disagreement among several Anglican bishops on how to handle polygamous situations. He surveyed two groups of church official and he was stunned to find out while some held to the traditional view, others were quite liberal and willing to grant baptism to polygamists.

In his research on the position of various Protestant churches on the polygamy issue across Africa, Hillman (1975) argued that there were evident inconsistencies. Hillman wrote:

Even in some of the same churches there are contradictory disciplines, and this fact says something about the arbitrary nature of ecclesiastical decisions that bind upon men "heavy and oppressive burdens" (Matt. 23:4). Anglicans, for example, in West Africa allow the wives of polygamists to be baptised, while in South Africa and elsewhere they are not even admitted to the catechumenate without the authorisation of the bishop in each case (Hillman 1975:34).

Hillman's allegations are well founded on the pastoral and practical levels of the polygamy issue. They are not correct, however, if he challenged

the Anglican church and other churches on their commitment to monogamy as the biblical norm for marriage.

Finally, the words of the Anglican bishop of Malawi in the 1960's should not be quickly dismissed. His comments were as follows:

I came to this Diocese from a country where Christianity had been planted largely by Christian wives of polygamous husbands, and their courage and resourcefulness in living a Christian life... and bringing up their children as practicing members of the church, won my admiration. It was with profound shock that I learned that here none of them would have been admitted to Holy Baptism, not because they had the misfortune to be bought up in a society where polygamy was the rule. After discussion with the clergy, changes are coming, and baptism will no longer be refused to a woman who was married to a polygamist before her baptism ([conversion] (quoted in Hillman 1975:34).

These words, though written many years ago echo the sentiments of many Christians and church leaders throughout the African continent even today. The battle over polygamy is far from being won, especially on the pastoral and practical levels.

Africa Inland Church, Kenya

About one hundred years ago, the Africa Inland Mission began work in East Africa, Kenya in particular. Such missionary endeavours resulted to one of the largest evangelical denominations in East and Central Africa, specifically in Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire and Southern Sudan. One of the issues which the mission in question struggled with for decades is that of polygamy. Many of the first converts were in polygamous situations. The Africa Inland Mission, like other Mission organisations, held a strong view on polygamy. They outrightly condemned polygamy and upheld monogamy as the type of marriage supported by the Scripture.

For quite some time, the Africa Inland Church in the countries mentioned above has struggled with the issue of polygamy in the church. The denomination's official position on polygamy may be summarised in its 1972 constitution which has not changed to date. The statements are as follows:

1. **No Christian man being a polygamist and no woman being a polygamous wife shall be baptised, unless in the case of the wife, she is the first to have been married.**

2. Polygamists and polygamous wives may receive catechetical instruction, but it shall be made clear in the beginning that such instruction does not anticipate baptism. However, the first wife may be accepted for baptism.
3. Where men living in polygamy give evidence of a desire to live the Christian life, every effort shall be made to help and encourage them, looking forward to the time when all the wives but one may be put away without dishonour to them.
4. A polygamist shall not put away a wife against her will and without providing for her. In response to honest, earnest prayer, God will provide a way.
5. A woman adherent or member of the Church who consents to her husband's polygamous marriage shall be put under Church discipline.
6. An adherent or member who takes a second wife or concubine shall be suspended from the Catechumenate or church as the case may be, until such time as he repents and gives up the woman in question (Africa Inland Church Constitution 1972:49).

For the most part, the position outlined above reflects that of other major church groups discussed earlier.

African Independent Churches

Many African Independent Churches have endorsed polygamy while others have repudiated it (Hillman 1975:32). Those independent groups who have accepted polygamy as the norm in marriage, have done so as "part of their conscious indigenization of Christianity in Africa" (Hillman 1975).

It has been recognised that the issue of polygamy led to the formation of many of the separatist church groups in various parts of Africa (Hillman 1975:33; Barrett 1968:117-118). For example polygamy was one of the issues which led to the formation of African Brotherhood Church. The separation in question occurred in Kenya back in 1945. To date, the African Brotherhood Church baptises polygamists while the Africa Inland Church condemns it, as has been demonstrated above.

According to some African Independent Churches, polygamy is not a moral evil since even the Bible itself endorses it, especially in the case of the patriarchs (Obeng 1987:47-48). For example, the constitution of the United Church of Cherubim and Seraphim endorses polygamy as apostle G. N. Abana wrote:

It is never a law that everyone must marry one wife, rather this law is given to bishops and deacons, as it is written in I Timothy 3:2.... Some people assume righteousness because they marry only one wife, while they are neither bishops nor deacons, but may be traders or workers. To these people, I say, hold fast to your one, but if you go to another woman, you have committed adultery. But if you know that one is not sufficient for you, marry as many as you can. In this I stand to say it is not bad to marry more than one.... (Obeng 1987:47-48).

Some of the African Independent churches have been excluded from ecumenical fellowship due to their stand on the issue of polygamy.

As we conclude this section, one thing clearly stands out, namely that all the major mission and church organisations have a lot in common. They have condemned polygamy and endorsed monogamy. On the other hand, there has been a high degree of flexibility among the African Independent churches, many of whom have accepted polygamy as part of their expression of authentic African Christianity. This perspective, however, should be challenged because it goes against the biblical teaching on the norm of marriage.

CONCLUSION

We began this study by the statement of the polygamy issue which includes the definition of the term, polygamy, as well as the historical background of the issue. It has been demonstrated that although polygamy has been practised in many societies for centuries, it has been, nevertheless, an African issue. Throughout history, scholars have not agreed on a uniform manner of dealing with polygamy in the church.

The second section of the paper dealt with factors which lead to polygamy among Africans. Some of these factors are more legitimate than others, from a cultural/anthropological perspective. In the third section, we dealt with biblical data on the issue. Both the Old and New Testament perspectives were explored, leading to the conclusion that while the Bible records many polygamous situations, it does not necessarily endorse it. On the contrary, the teaching from Genesis 2 and Matthew 19:4-5 indicates that God's norm from the beginning was monogamy.

The fourth section examined various church positions on polygamy in Africa. It has been demonstrated that with minor variations, the major church denominations in Africa all condemn polygamy and endorse monogamy. The key issue has been that of refusing baptism to the polygamist and his wives except the first wife.

After all is said and done, three conclusions need to be offered. One, the issue of polygamy in Africa is far from being a dead issue. It is true that there may not be as many polygamous situations today as there were for example in the 1970's. Nevertheless, the few cases there may be involve real people and merits attention. Two, the church in Africa should re-evaluate its stand on the issue, by standing firm on the biblical teaching on monogamous marriage. At the same time, pastoral care should be exercised for those who are victims of the polygamy issue. For instance, those who became polygamists before they were converted should not be denied baptism. On the other hand, Christians who engage in polygamy need to be disciplined by the church, of course, in the spirit of love.

Three, the issue of baptism should be discussed and defined, since it seems to have been at the centre of the issue for centuries. Evangelical churches in Africa should be warned against confusing water baptism with the conversion experience. There are known cases, for example in Kenya, when men and women would be denied baptism due to their polygamous situation, even when they evidence a very high degree of commitment to Christ.

REFERENCES CITED

- Africa Inland Church Constitution*. Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1972.
- Barrett, David B. *Schism and Renewal in Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Burce, Willard. "Polygamy and the Church." *Concordia Theological Monthly* 34: 223-232, 1963.
- Carmichael, Calum M. 1974. *The Laws of Deuteronomy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press
- Castaneda, Terri A. "Negotiating Autonomy: African Women and Christianity" in *Embodied Level*. ed., Paula M. Cooley. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Child's, Brevard S. *The Book of Exodus: A critical, Theological Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974.
- Davies, G. H. *Exodus*. London: SCM Press, 1967.
- Fuller, J.M. *The Bible Commentary on the Old Testament: Exodus-Ruth*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953.
- Gitari, David. "Rethinking Polygamy." *The Other Side* 24 (April): 42-43, 1988.
- Hillman, Eugene. "Polygamy Reconsidered." *Practical Anthropology* 17 (March-April): 60-73, 1970.
- *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and the Churches*. New York: Mary Knoll, 1975.

- "On Polygamy: A Response." *AFER* 23 (October): 292-307, 1981.
- "The Polygamy Debate: A Progress Report." *Missiology* 10 (January):161-169, 1982.
- "Polygamy and Social Justice." *AFER* 24 (February): 171-172, 1982.
- Holst, Robert. "Polygamy and the Bible." *The International Review of Mission* 56 (July):205-212, 1967.
- Hunter, G. *The New Societies of Tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Hyatt, J. P. *New Century Bible Commentary on Exodus*. London: Oliphants, 1971.
- Iteka, Patrick. "Polygamy and the Local Church." *AFER* 23 (February): 106-108, 1981.
- Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.
- Kent, Homer A. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1958.
- Kline, Meredith G. *Treaty of the Great King*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.
- Kidner, Derek. *Genesis: And Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967.
- Mann, Pamela. "Toward Biblical Understand of Polygamy." *Missiology* 17 (January): 11-26, 1989.
- Mayes, A. D. H. *New Century Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.
- Mbiti, John S. *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969.
- *Introduction to African Religion*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975.
- Morris, Henry M. *The Genesis Record*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.
- Mpolo, Masamba M. ed., *Families in Transition*. Geneva: WCC Publication, 1987.
- Newing, Edward G. "The Baptism of Polygamous Families: Theory and Practice in an East African Church." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 3: 130-141, 1970.
- Obeng, E. A. "Inroads of African Religions into Christianity: The Case of the Spiritual Churches" *African Theological Journal* 16: 43-52, 1987.
- Saucy, Robert L. "The Husband of One Wife." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131 (July-Sept): 229-240, 1974.
- Shorter, A. *East African Societies*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.
- *Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology*. New York: Maryknoll.
- Stott, John R. W. *Involvement: Social and Sexual Relationships in the Modern World*. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revel Company, 1984.
- Taylor, Kenneth N. "Polygamy: Is it ever Permissible?" *Eternity* 15 (July): 25, 46, 1964.
- Tippet, Alan R. "Polygamy as a Missionary Problem: The Anthropological

- Issues." *Practical Anthropology* 17 (March-April): 75-79, 1970.
- Trowell, H. C. 1956. *The Passing of Polygamy: A Discussion of Marriage and Sex for African Christians*. London: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Urrutia, Francisco J. "Can Polygamy be compatible with Christianity?" *EFER* 23 (October): 275-291.
- Vass, George. "Divorce and Remarriage in the Light of Recent Publications." *Heythrop Journal* 11: 259-260, 1970.
- Von Rad, Gerhard. *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966 (1964: German).
- Yego, Joshat. "Polygamy and the African Church: a Survey." *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 3: 60-84, 1984.

Contributors Invited for AJET

We welcome articles by evangelical scholars for publication in AJET. Such articles will be screened by the Editorial Committee, based on the following criteria:

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

Theology: Since the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* publishes theological reflection based on the authority of Scripture, articles submitted to AJET should reflect an evangelical perspective.

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

Format: Articles should be type written, double spaced with bibliography at the end of the paper. End-notes should be properly given, following guidelines of scholarly publications.

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

AFRICAN WIDOWHOOD PRACTICES: THE IGBO MOURNING EXPERIENCE

A.M. Okorie

The Good News of Jesus Christ has brought salvation and hope to many who suffered in their former way of life. No greater contrast can be found than in the two different approaches to death, that of the Christian faith and that of African traditions. The Gospel liberates believers from the fear of death and fear of the living-dead. Yet the deep seated world view of African traditions persist, even in Christian communities. Dr. Okorie explores the mourning experience of the Igbo of Nigeria, as experienced particularly by the widows. He briefly mentions some of the ways in which the biblical teaching should transform the traditional approach to death. Death with all the beliefs and practices surrounding this universal experience deserves more thought in order to know how to bring complete deliverance to God's people held in bondage of fear.

DESCRIPTION OF TRADITIONAL IGBO MOURNING

In Igboland, Nigeria, the widow's mourning of the dead husband is viewed as a very important tradition which the living spouse must observe in honour of the dead. When the husband of the woman dies, the mourning begins at that moment of his final breath. The bereaved wife runs about wailing at the top of her voice. A prominent feature is the intensity of wailing, weeping and hysteria which death generates or is expected to generate. The children would join in the wailing together with other friends and relatives of the family. In their wailing they would regret a big loss as they recount the deceased's life achievements, his love and faithfulness, a good, honest, reliable brother, husband, father or uncle. After this stage, the wife becomes the main focus in terms of mourning the departed husband.

Much demand is made of the wife in terms of mourning to show her identification or concern for the man's departure from earth. The wife must be made to tie cloth on the body of the late husband (*ijebo di akwa*). In some part of Igboland like Onitsha, the divorced wife of the man must return to mourn the man and do posthumous reconciliation with the man in the presence of the matrilineal daughters (*umuada*), otherwise she is believed to be in danger of the ghost of the deceased man. But it should be pointed out that the wife (or wives, if he was a polygamist) of a titled man is (are) not allowed to cry or make any noise until proper arrangement is made. This means that the widow has to suppress the natural psychological grief in her for some days simply because

her husband was a titled person.

In Igboland, the patrilineal daughters (*umuada*) have great influence or authority in the family or community where they are born. They can use this power as a check-and-balance over their brother's wife. The widow's behaviour when the husband was alive and her relationship with relatives of her husband determine the intensity of her mourning. The negligence of mourning rituals may rob her of her late husband's property, and love of the community. Sometimes this can be tyrannical on the widow, especially if she has not been relating well with her husband's sisters. The *Umuada* are the enforcement agency and decide how severe the mourning should be. The *umuada* surround the widow, commanding her to make sure she obeys the rules of mourning rites. Nwoga correctly points out that:

They may sit her on a mattress with pillows and cushions around her or sit her on a plain mat or even the bare ground. They may accept that she is crying loud enough for their brother or they may sneer and jeer at her and accuse her of not crying loud enough, of keeping the tail of her eyes open for her past lovers or prospective lovers and in serious cases of dislike beat her up.¹

From that moment the husband died, the widow is believed to be unclean, and likely to contaminate herself and others. Therefore, no one touches her except her fellow widows, who are equally believed to be defiled. She is given a piece of stick to scratch herself in case of natural body irritation, and oil palm chaff (*avuvu nkwu*) to wash her hand periodically in order to reduce her uncleanness. She is also not allowed to eat any food bought for the funeral ceremony. It is feared that she will die if she eats such foods. Hence, her food during the funeral ceremonies is cooked separately.

The days before the burial of the man are always horrible for the widow as she is made to stay in the same room with the corpse where she is required to be waving away flies from perching on the fast and progressively decomposing corpse. She is supposed to sit down and raise an early morning cry before anybody is awake and this continues till the day the husband will be buried. Her most painful ordeal occurs at night before her husband's burial. They make sure she stays awake all night with bitter kola (*aku ilu*) in her mouth to remind her of the bitterness of the death of her husband.² Furthermore, if the widow had disputed with the husband shortly before his death, the widow will be made to lie with the corpse for many hours and in addition pay heavily in cash as a fine.

Soon after the interment of the late husband's body, the widow will be made to wash her hands with shrubs known as *akoro* or *ujiji* for four times so as to absolve herself from the deceased's death. She is not expected to eat with her defiled hand until this ritual is performed. Again, the husband's eldest sister or one of the *umuada* is supposed to give an order for her hair to be shaved. This time the widow is taken to the backyard where she is kept naked and all parts of her body containing hair (head, armpit, eyebrows including the privates) are shaved and sometimes buried or burnt ritually. After this, onions or some other concoctions will be used to rub at these shaved parts in order to dispel the spirit of the husband from disturbing her. The shaving is done by a member of *umuada* who also is a widow. A further reason for shaving the hair is the belief that it is a symbol of breaking off all links between the widow and the deceased husband. Also, a widow is made to shave in order to look unattractive, so that men would not "eye" her for love in that pitiful condition. The mourning mood acts as a "keep-off" sign for other men; and it attracts their sympathy instead, connoting "it is a pity." Conversely, the shaving of hair is generally believed to be a sign of mourning, love, respect, and honour for the dead.

Then, there follows the seclusion period (*ino na nso*). This is a period of deep mourning and it lasts for seven native weeks (*izu asa*), totalling twenty-eight days. At this period the widow never eats with nor talks to anybody except her fellow widows. She never greets nor responds to any greeting but if she does, she is believed to have passed ill-luck to the greeter or responder. She wears only rags, sits on a piece of wood, and sleeps on a mat or banana leaves. As usual, in some part of Igboland like Nsukka, she cannot put her hand in her mouth. She may not wash her face nor bathe. Her necklaces should be broken as a symbol of non-communication with the husband.

After this period of impurity, the widow is taken at night by the patrilineal daughters to the bad bush far from the residential zone of the community for bathing and cleansing.³ The bathing has to take place on the grave of the deceased husband, especially if it were to be in some part of Owerri. The cloth which she used during the seclusion period is burnt ritually or given to the older attendant widow. She now puts on the real black cloth for the rest of the mourning period which is supposed to last for a year as a sign of grief and love for the departed. The day after the cleansing, she exercises her restricted liberty as she is received back into the family and can now cook what others can eat and have the freedom to talk to people.

Thereafter, the period of lengthy mourning follows. In this period, the widow's liberty is still restricted since she may not go to work or market. It is here that a widow runs the risk of breaking down socially, economically and

psychologically after her lengthy mourning, particularly if she has no grown-up children and if her husband's relatives do not care for her. The belief exists that any farm crops she touches at this stage of the mourning are liable to wither away. Consequently, the widow never goes to farm during the period. Likewise, she should not fight nor beat anybody when provoked, because it is believed she would transfer the spirit of the deceased to the beaten.

At the end of the lengthy mourning period, through which the widow is required to mourn her late husband for one year, the ceremonies close officially with some ritual cleansing. At this time the widow would strip off her final mourning cloth for ritual burning or burial. More rituals have to be carried out to liberate the widow from the influence of the dead husband and reintegrate her into the society to begin a normal life and if she desires, she may remarry. Some go as far as attempting to decipher the mind of the deceased husband through a fortune-teller (*dibia*), if there were some things left out during mourning which might attract the wrath of the deceased to the discomfort of the widow and her children. Thus, mourning the husband is excruciating on the wife and she suffers from inhumane cultural rituals.

In contrast, however, mourning a late wife by a surviving husband is different and less demanding. As the wife and mother of the home departs, both the husband and children break down emotionally. While the children give full vent to their grief, their father shakes his head in agony. The widower will be made to sit down on a particular place to express his grief through facial expressions. In Igboland, a man is not expected to wail openly like a woman. His facial courage is supposed to be a first aid condolence, comfort and hope for the children who are psychologically broken down. After the burial of the wife, the widower is expected to mourn for at least six months or one year. In strict traditional obedience, the man may mourn for only twenty eight days. This is based on the idea that the absence of the woman makes her unimportant to the surviving husband except through her children and kin. Henderson calls it an "asymmetrical relationship between husband and wife, for a wife's funeral duties are quite different from a husband."⁴ Hence, it differs from that of a widow who undergoes intensive rituals at the hands of the *umuada*. But just as the woman is shaved for the man, so also the man is shaved for the woman. He is to shave off his hair, beard and wear black cloth throughout the period of mourning. Nonetheless, many widowers have not been obeying this rule strictly, unlike the widows who are forced to obey theirs.

At the end of the morning, the man goes to the nearest river and dips his feet into the water, pulls the inner pair of pants he wears and throws it away. Although the reason for this ritual is not told, yet it could likely be a rite of

purification and breakage of marital accord, since the Igbo philosophy accepts that the spirit of the dead hovers around, looking for normal life relationship. Again, the death of a spouse renders the living one impure and therefore he or she needs ritual purification. Nevertheless, after the ceremony at the end of the mourning, the man is expected to be free and may marry a new wife. Mourning, therefore, is understood as an expression of the widower's grief, love and respect for the dead. But for the widow, the process can be brutal and inhuman in practice.

CONTEMPORARY EVALUATION OF TRADITIONAL IGBO MOURNING

In an attempt to articulate the plight of a widow in Igbo community, various persons and organisations have reacted to the matter. Eze and Nwebo jointly observe that "discriminatory oppression of our women (including, and in particular widows) under our laws and customs, in terms of status and rights, is dehumanising and debasing to womanhood, unjust and unconstitutional."⁵ Additionally, Nzewi condemns the Igbo concept of death as being responsible for the wrong concept of mourning by saying:

The traditional concept of death is also an important factor in widowhood practices in the state. Since traditionally it is believed that the dead continue to participate in and influence the lives of the living,...we saw in one area where the widows have to run very hot mixtures across the face to expel the spirits of their departed husbands.⁶

This leads to spiritual bondage on the part of the Igbo community for being enslaved to superstition, mythology and antiquated tradition. Following a similar viewpoint, Okereke and Eke-Agbai call for the "removal in our society, of those cultural practices which, in the context of man's development, as we know it today, do not add to our dignity and respect for life...culture is a dynamic phenomenon that should always change to accommodate advances in life."⁷

Some of these cultural traits were without attack when Igbo community was isolated, but civilisation has come with its own enlightenment and belief systems, including Christianity, whose teachings have won and eaten deep into the fabrics of the people's hearts. As a result, one does not need a radical refusal of the total tradition and culture, but a change of the oppressive ones and modernisation of crude ones. Now the issue arises as to how the change can be affected for the better. Afigbo succinctly writes:

My prescription is knowledge. Not knowledge of how to read and count, but the kind of knowledge which frees a man from the powers of darkness by showing him how he and his every thought, word and deed fit into the scheme of creation... Africa is not only underdeveloped materially, but also spiritually. Our spiritual underdevelopment is most manifest in the way we react to death.... Our widowhood practices advertise our immaturity.⁸

From the various foregoing reactions and analyses, it is clear that the widowhood practices with respect to mourning are unethical. The church, consequently, should continually educate its members and the Igbo community at large (about 15 million people) on what should be the Christian understanding and approach to death. Such Christian education should shape the ways and modes of mourning the dead.

For example, I Thessalonians 4:13-18 allows Christians to mourn the dead, yet it condemns the expression of despair which leads the mourner into superstition, with its inherent rituals that do not glorify God. The real Christian mourning is a time of introspection, a time of spiritual quest for righteousness. That is the moment when the mourner thinks about his or her own spiritual state and worthiness to meet the Lord at the moment of death.⁹ It is a period of concentrated reflection on the mourner's relationship with the Lord Jesus and his or her future abode after death.

This article, therefore, submits that in widowhood practices, the Igbo mourning experience is dehumanising, discriminatory against women, antisocial, unlawful, oppressive and pagan. To that effect, Christians are to avoid submitting totally to Igbo traditional mourning and its consequent danger to personal economic, social and ethical life. Mourning the dead spouse for Christians should be a time of prayer, meditation, recollection, memorial, affection, honour, gratitude, confession, empathy, surrender, and anticipation for the life of the one who has slept in the Lord.

¹ Nwoga, I.D. "Widowhood Practices: The Imo Experience," (Owerri, Multi-Purpose Hall, 6 June 1989) (Mimeographed), pp.3-4.

² Nzewi, E.N. "Widowhood Practices: Female Prejudice," (Owerri, Multi-Purpose Hall, 6 June 1989) (Mimeographed), p.8.

³ See also John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1969), pp. 145-146.

⁴ Henderson, Richard N. *The King in Every Man*. (London: University Press, 1972), pp. 229-230.

⁵ Eze, O.C. and O.E. Nwebo. "Widowhood Practices: Law and Custom" (Owerri, Multi-Purpose Hall, 6 June 1989) (Mimeographed), p. 14.

⁶ Nzewi, E.N. "Female Prejudice" (Owerri, Multi-Purpose Hall, 6 June 1989) (Mimeographed), p. 21.

⁷ Okereke, Emma and Oby Eke-Agbai. "Poor Treatment of Widows," *The Statesman*, 7 June 1989, p.1.

⁸ Afigbo, A.E. "Widowhood Practices in Africa: A Preliminary Survey and Analysis" (Owerri, Multi-Purpose Hall, 6 June 1989) (Mimeographed), p.29.

⁹ Stringfellow, William. "The Joy of Mourning: On Grief and the Meaning of Resurrection," *Sojourner*, 3 (1982), 32.

WILL THE AFRICAN ANCESTORS BE SAVED?

Richard J. Gehman

AJET would like to encourage articles written on various theological issues which draw forth further responses from readers in well researched articles. As evangelicals we accept the Scriptures as our final authority in faith and practice. But we all know that Scripture does not address all our questions specifically or systematically. As a result, various evangelicals reach different conclusions. In the past evangelicals have been united in believing that a personal faith in Jesus Christ is essential for salvation. Because of this belief the Christian Church has invested many lives and extensive effort to bring the Gospel to all peoples. But the erosion of this historic Christian belief can be found in many places. Following is a brief article on a difficult question which needs more extensive treatment by evangelicals in Africa who will explore carefully the whole question of salvation of those who have never heard the Gospel.

INTRODUCTION

A burning question that will not go away is this: "Will any of the forefathers in Africa, who never heard the Gospel, be saved?" This question arises repeatedly. "What will happen to our fathers who lived before the Gospel was brought to Africa? Will they spend eternity in hell?" This is a difficult question that brings much pain and concern. The problem becomes even more difficult when you think of the impossibility of people believing the Gospel when no Christian Gospel had ever been preached to them.

J.N.D. Anderson phrases the problem well.

If the only way to God is through Christ, and the only basis of forgiveness and acceptance is the atonement effected at the cross, then what about all those countless millions of people in the world today - to say nothing of the millions who have already lived and died - who, through no fault of their own, have never heard of the only mediator and only Saviour? Are they utterly without hope? (Anderson 1970:100).

There is no possibility of giving a thorough answer to this question in this brief article. The purpose of the author is to explore from the Scriptures the various elements which should help determine our approach to this vital subject.

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOD OF JUSTICE AND MERCY

We face many questions in life for which we do not have an adequate answer. The Bible simply does not answer all the particular problems we raise. Many of these questions deal with the justice and fairness of God. For example, what will happen to small infants and tiny children if they die? Will they go to heaven or hell?

The Roman Catholics teach that all unbaptized children are lost and enter a place called Limbus Infantum, a place on the edges of hell, separated from the presence of God but without any suffering (Jackson 1959:VI,490). But this is speculation without any support from Scripture.

The Westminster Confession teaches that the "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth"(Westminster Confession X,3). By implication it teaches infants not elected will not be saved. But where does Scripture teach such a doctrine?

According to Charles Hodge, "the common doctrine of evangelical Protestants is... [that] All who die in infancy are saved" (Hodge 1952:1,26). In fact, many Calvinist theologians today teach that all those children who die as infants will be saved. Many Protestants would suggest that babies are innocent before they reach the age of knowing right from wrong and therefore will go to heaven. But does not the Bible teach that all are born in sin and are sinful by nature? (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-21). Hodge further argues,

The Scriptures nowhere exclude any class of infants, baptised or unbaptised, born in Christian or in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents, from the benefits off the redemption of Christ (Hodge 1952: 1,26).

How can infants be saved without knowing or understanding their sin and the offer of salvation through Jesus Christ? Buswell suggests a novel idea by *postulating*,

that the Holy Spirit of God prior to the moment of death, does so enlarge the intelligence of one who dies in infancy (and I should make the same postulate to cover those who die in imbecility without having reached a state of accountability), that they are capable of accepting Jesus Christ (Buswell 1979:II,162).

But which Scripture teaches this? Theologians would do well to remain silent where Scripture is silent. In too many instances, we generate a theology without any clear teaching from Scripture.

In questions like these we must rest in the confidence that "the judge of all the earth" will do what is right. Our attitude should be one of a child with simple trust in our heavenly Father. The testimony of the believer should be that which was spoken by Abraham, the father of all that believe. "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Whatever the final decision will be concerning the future destiny of those who never heard the Gospel, we can rest in God who is righteous and just. Our faith rests in God who is fair and not in doctrine or theological statements without any biblical base.

Let us remember this. God has not been pleased to give clear answers to all our questions. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever..." (Deut.29:29). We rejoice in what God has revealed. But we also trust Him for those things not yet revealed.

What follows does go beyond a mere agnosticism on this question. The Bible does give some real guidelines to this problem, whether a person without a knowledge of the Gospel will ever be saved. But if the following answer does not satisfy everyone, we should search the Scriptures more thoroughly. However, in the end we must leave the matter to God who is just and loving and will do what is right.

SCRIPTURE OFFERS NO HOPE TO THE CLASS OF PEOPLE WHO NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL

Boettner says, "The Christian Church has been practically of one mind in declaring that the heathens as a class are lost" (Buis 1957:142).

Men and women, outside of Christ, are dead in sin, walking according to the ways of Satan and are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). Men and women are separated from Christ, strangers to the promises, without hope and without God in this world (Eph. 2:11, 12). People without Christ are without hope (I Thess. 4:13; 5:6). When those following other religions offer sacrifices to their gods, they are serving demons without knowing it (I Cor.10:20, 21). Romans 1-3 reveals the spiritual condition of those who have never heard the Gospel.

The following Scriptures speak directly to this problem, whether people will be lost forever who have never heard the Gospel. "All who sin apart from those who never had the law of Moses nor the gospel of Jesus Christ will nevertheless "perish part from the law."

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news' (Rom. 10:13-15).

The fact is that the Scriptures cited above were a primary motivation of evangelical missions through the centuries. Those pioneering missionaries who left the comforts of their own homes to venture forth into unknown lands were moved by the deep conviction that without the Gospel of Jesus Christ, those people would be lost.

Indeed, Christ said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me" (Jh. 14:6). The early church taught that Christ was the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12). If we can trust Christ as our Saviour we must also trust him as our teacher and Lord. The early church followed Christ in faith and so must we.

It is no surprise that those churches who have lost confidence in this biblical truth have declined in their missionary zeal. Today there are more missionaries serving with the Wycliffe Bible Translators (translating the Bible into those languages which do not have the Scriptures) than all those missionaries from the mainline Protestant Churches in America affiliated with the National Council of Churches. To surrender the historic Christian belief in the lostness of men without the Gospel will result in loss of zeal for the evangelism of those without a knowledge of Christ.

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN AMONG ALL PEOPLE

Those who doubt the doctrine of eternal punishment, because they feel sympathy toward the lost, have forgotten the biblical teaching of sin and the need for salvation. Many teach that human nature is essentially good. It is through the influences of the environment men become wicked.

But the Bible teaches that all people without exception were born sinners and are sinners by nature because we are all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-14). In fact, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jer. 17:9). Men may try to change and reform their ways, but they cannot. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil" (Jer. 13:23). Being right before the Lord is more than doing the right things. We have "hidden faults" not seen by others (Ps. 19:12). God desires "truth in the inner parts" (Ps. 51:6) and He is the one who searches the heart "and examines the mind" (Jer. 17:10). And God's conclusion is this.

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:10-12).

When considering the destiny of those who never heard the Gospel, the suggestion is often made that we find much virtue and morality among those people. Yes, indeed we do. This is because of God's common grace given to all men and women. However, the truth remains the same, as we have stated above. "There is no one who does good, not even one," when the motives, attitudes and heart are examined.

No one, not even the unevangelised peoples of the world without the gospel, can be saved because of their virtues and morality. For people are not saved by being good. No one can be good enough. A son of Abraham asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" When Jesus listed various commandments, the man answered honestly, "All these I have kept since I was a boy" (LK. 18:18, 21). But Jesus looked into his heart and knew that he did not love God with all his heart. For his love for money took first place in his life.

As the Westminster Confession says,

"Men, not professing the Christian religion," cannot be saved "in any other way whatsoever than by Christ, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess..." (Westminster Confession X,4).

Salvation is only by grace through faith alone. Repentance for sin and trust in God who offers forgiveness is the only way to God. Morality is not the way to God but repentance is. "Sorrow for sin produces morality; but morality does not produce sorrow for sin" (Shedd n.d.: 11, 709). Though someone may appear to be a moral, upright man, his heart is, in fact, selfish and proud. He must repent and believe the Gospel.

LIMITATIONS OF GENERAL REVELATION AND NECESSITY OF SPECIAL REVELATION

The Bible teaches that God has revealed Himself to all men and women, not just to a chosen few. This general revelation is given in nature and conscience. God has revealed something of Himself in nature (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:18-20) and something of His law in their conscience (Rom. 2:14, 15).

But this general revelation is limited. The person and nature of God and his moral requirements have been revealed to some extent. But nothing of God's grace and way of salvation has been made known. General revelation means that they

moral requirements have been revealed to some extent. But nothing of God's grace and way of salvation has been made known. General revelation means that they are "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). For everyone knows something of right and wrong and everyone knows that they have fallen short of that moral standard. So they stand under God's judgement. But general revelation does not announce the good news of forgiveness of sin. This was revealed from the beginning by God through special revelation to various individuals and peoples (compare Gen. 3:21; 4:2-7; 12:1-3)

God owes salvation to no one (Eph. 2:8, 9). All have sinned without exception (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, everyone deserves punishment for his sin, namely, eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Everyone is responsible for his or her disobedience because of what God has revealed to everyone in nature and conscience. But God's revelation of Himself and His gracious offer of salvation is by grace and grace alone. God is not obligated to save anyone. Unless God graciously reveals Himself to man (special revelation), and unless man repents of his sin and believes in the gospel, he cannot be saved.

Cornelius is often set forth as an example of one Gentile who was saved without the Gospel (Acts 10:34, 35). But the text does not support that conclusion.

Cornelius is described as a godly man, one who feared God with all his heart and one who behaved righteously toward his fellow man (10:2, 35).

But Cornelius was not an ordinary Gentile for more reasons than his godly character. For he was not limited to the light of nature. Scripture reveals him to be a "God-fearer." That is, he had become a worshipper of the Lord God along with the Jews. Cornelius does not appear to have become a "proselyte of righteousness," one who was circumcised and completely identified as a Jew. But he had become "a proselyte of the gate." That is, one who followed the so-called Noachian commandments against idolatry, blasphemy, disobedience to magistrates, murder, fornication or incest, robbery or theft and the eating of blood (compare Gen. 9:4-6).

Therefore, Cornelius was not a typical Gentile. He had a knowledge of the ten commandments, a knowledge of the true nature of sin, the need of grace, the place of sacrifice and the God of grace. As a Jewish proselyte, a convert to Judaism, Cornelius knew all that.

The words of Peter, however, seem to have a broader application. "...God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34, 35).

Does Peter here teach a salvation by works? By "fearing" God and "doing what is right," can the Gentiles be saved? Mercy can only be found when a person repents and entrusts Himself to God with a sincere heart. "Fearing God" and "working righteousness" are the fruit and evidence of the new life in Christ, not the conditions for salvation. Joseph Alexander observes, "This verse has sometimes been abused, to prove that the knowledge of the Gospel is not necessary to the

salvation of the heathen" (Alexander 1956:409).

The context proves otherwise. The whole emphasis in this chapter is God does not show prejudice toward people. Unlike Peter who was prejudiced towards the Gentiles, "God does not show partiality" (10:34; compare 10:1-23). The Gospel is universal in application. While we take this for granted today, this revelation was revolutionary to Peter. This is shown by the great prominence this whole story is given in Acts 10 and 11. Wherever a man of any race, nation or people truly seeks after God, the Lord will receive him.

We may go even further. H.A. Ironside in his commentary remarks, "That tells us this: Wherever a man is found in all the world who turns in repentance to God and takes the place of a lost sinner and trusts God for deliverance, He will make Himself responsible to give that man light enough to be saved" (Ironside 1943:254) God is not one to show partiality. A truly repentant heart moved by the grace of God, will be given sufficient light in order for him to be saved.

In fact, this is the very thing that happened with Cornelius. Cornelius was seeking but not saved. He had followed the light granted to him through the Law, but had not yet found Christ. For this reason the Holy Spirit sent the Apostle Peter to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Not until Peter preached Christ did the Holy Spirit fall upon them (10:44). And Paul taught, "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom.8:9).

POSSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUALS KNOWING GOD IN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Stated above is the biblical teaching that the Bible does not offer hope to that class of people who have never heard the Gospel. As Boettner says, "The Scriptures, then, are plain in declaring that under ordinary conditions those who have not Christ and the Gospel are lost" (Buis 1957:142).

But the Old Testament does indicate that some people, outside the nation of Israel, have truly known God. How they have come to know God has not been revealed. Such individual examples are the exception, not the rule. Nevertheless, we are led to believe that God is not limited to the normal or usual channels of bringing revelation of His grace. God has and He can reveal Himself to individuals apart from the usual preaching of the Gospel.

Job was "blameless and upright," one who "feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). How he came to know God is not revealed, though it is clear that he was not from the line of Abraham.

More surprising is Melchizedek. Unless one assumes that he was Christ

revealed in the flesh before the birth of the Saviour as some believe, Melchizedek was "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18). That is, he was a Canaanite priest who served the true and living God whom Abraham recognised as "God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth" (14:22). Though the Canaanites engaged in child sacrifice and worshipped many gods, here was one man who was a true believer in the living God. Abraham acknowledged his authority as priest of God Most High by offering to him "a tenth of everything" (14:20).

Whether or not Abimelech, king of Gerar (a city of the Philistines), was a true believer is not clear from the Bible. But the irony is that the Bible shows that the king of the Philistines was more upright in this instance than Abram (Genesis 20:1-18). On the one hand, Abram deceived Abimelech with a half truth out of fear. Abram thought, "There is surely no fear of God in this place" (20:11). On the other hand Abimelech surprised Abram, for he did fear God. Gerar replied to God in a dream, "I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands" (20:5).

Balaam is a strange figure in the Old Testament (Numbers 22-24). Was he a false prophet or a disobedient prophet of the Lord? Without seeking to answer that question, we do observe the following. Balaam received revelation from the LORD (YAHWEH). In an act of obedience he replied to the elders of Moab and Median, "I will bring you back the answer the LORD (YAHWEH) gives me" (22:8). Elsewhere he said, "I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD..." (22:18). Furthermore, Balaam calls the LORD (YAHWEH), "the LORD my God" (22:18). Here was a man, coming from Mesopotamia, the land near the River (Euphrates), who had some knowledge of the true God.

These few examples and others do not provide any basis for a general hope that those without a knowledge of the Word of God will be saved. But they do suggest that God can reveal Himself to individuals if He so chooses. This significant statement is made by the Reformed theologian, Bavinck.

In so far as heathenism as a system of belief and practices is concerned, I agree with those scholars who proclaim its vanity; but with regard to the religious life of the individual Gentile, I am inclined to believe that we must not underestimate the power of God's mercy and charity" (Bavinck 1948:108).

Shedd observes,

It is not the doctrine of the Church, that the entire mass of pagans, without exception, have gone down to endless impotence and death. That some unevangelised men are saved, in the present life, by an extraordinary exercise of redeeming grace in Christ, has been the hope and belief of Christendom (Shedd n.d.:11, 706).

Salvation does not depend on the clear understanding of all the doctrines of grace. People in the Old Testament had a less clear understanding of God's grace

than those in the church age. "Under the Old dispensation, nay, during the time of our Saviour's abode on earth, it was possible for a man to be a true believer, and in a state of grace, who was ignorant of the sufferings, the death, and the resurrection of Christ..." (quoted from Witsius, an elder Calvinist, in Shedd n.d.: 11, 706).

Salvation is not based on morality of life but on repentance of sin and trust in the Lord who offers His salvation and forgiveness. Zanchius, a conservative Calvinist in the sixteenth century, believed that some individuals in countries where the Gospel had not been preached, "may belong to the secret election of grace," and have a broken and contrite heart in repentance for their sin (Shedd n.d.: 708).

The emphasis in this section is this. General Revelation does not offer any hope of salvation. Only by special revelation by God Himself can anyone understand his own sinful condition, repent of his sin, and turn to the Lord for forgiveness. Normally, this comes through the preaching of the Gospel. But there may be some individuals whom God draws to Himself, even as He did with Job, Melchizedek and others. But this is the exception, not the rule.

BASIS FOR THE FINAL JUDGEMENT OF NON-CHRISTIANS

How can people be judged by the Gospel which they never heard? Is it fair for someone to be condemned for not accepting Christ when, in fact, they have never heard of Christ? How can anyone be responsible for what he or she does not know? The Bible is clear on this.

"All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). The standard by which all people will be judged is the standard which they know. Those who never heard the words of special revelation will be judged by the natural revelation which they have in their own conscience (Rom. 2:15, 16).

This passage does not teach salvation by keeping the law. For the Bible teaches that no one can be saved by keeping the law, for no one keeps the law perfectly, not even the law of the conscience (Gal. 3:10, 11; James 2:10).

Rather, it teaches that everyone will be judged by the light of revelation they have actually received, not by what they should have known if the Gospel had been preached to them.

FINAL JUDGEMENT VARIES ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT GIVEN

Buis makes an interesting observation.

The unwillingness of many to believe that the heathen are really lost is

based largely on the crude conception of hell ... If we have a conception (as many of the opponents and some of the advocates of the doctrine have) that all men who are lost will roast for eternity in a sort of common frying pan, we might well question how it is possible that those who have never had an opportunity will yet end up in such a condition" (Buis 1957:142).

The fact is that there are degrees of punishment in hell, according to the Scriptures. All sin is sin. And the wages of sin is death. But the knowledge of God's will is not equally known. Every man has some knowledge of right and wrong through general revelation but not every man has the full light of the Gospel through special revelation.

In Luke 12:43-48 we find the key. Those who knew the master's will but did not do it, "shall receive many blows." But he who "does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows" (Lk. 12:48). All those outside of Christ will remain outside of salvation, for all have sinned. But the degree of punishment will vary.

The towns of Galilee where Jesus performed all his miracles and the pagan cities of Sodom and Gomorra and Tyre and Sidon are an illustration of this. Because Jesus had performed many miracles among the people of Galilee, they were more responsible than pagans who had little light. They would be more severely punished for their rejection of Christ than Sodom which had little light. "... it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgement than for you" (Matt. 11:20-24).

Hebrews speaks of a more severe punishment for the man who rejects the final revelation of God through Jesus Christ, than the punishment given to those who rejected the law of Moses without the knowledge of the Gospel (Heb. 10:29). By extension we might say that those without any special revelation will have less punishment than those with special revelation.

As Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be required" (Lk. 12:48). However, we must remember. Though men without the gospel will receive less punishment, they will endure eternal separation from God.

THE FINAL TEST

The final test, whether someone is truly seeking after God, is what he or she does with the Gospel when it is presented to him.

If a man responds to the Gospel soon after it has been first presented, we may assume that God has been preparing his heart. But if a person rejects the good news, we may assume that his religious devotion was something less than inspired by the true God.

There are some reports of people who were prepared for a momentary, instantaneous acceptance of the Gospel, but not many. Bavinck tells of a former priest in Annam who believed that his own religion was not sufficient to satisfy the hunger of his heart. In a room in his house he put up a piece of cloth with these words written, "Mr. Heaven." Every morning at 5:00 A.M. he knelt and prayed, "If you exist, O Lord, then reveal Thyself to me." He did this for five years. When he heard of a new religion, Christianity, in a distant city, he eagerly went to inquire and became a Christian (Bavinck 1948:97). As H.A. Ironside said, when someone truly responds in repentance and faith to what God has revealed to Him in nature and conscience and through the power of the Holy Spirit, then God is pleased to bring more light and understanding through the preaching of the Word.

But in all honesty such examples are few. When the Christian missionaries entered Ukambani in Kenya, they became discouraged because the people did not respond more quickly to the Gospel. The Church Missionary Society left the Akamba for this reason and handed the work over to the Africa Inland Mission in 1902. The A.I.M. continued to experience little response to the Gospel.

The following letter expresses their discouragement.

For three years the Gospel has been preached here and there among the people but it has been exceedingly difficult to make any lasting impression. Messages given through itinerating work, were half understood, less believed, and almost forgotten before the missionary could get back to the field again (Hearing and Doing, X, 4, 1905:3, 4).

Two years later the following was reported.

The selfishness, indolence and indifference of the Akamba tribe have discouraged many workers. We recently heard of a German Mission who, after many years of fruitless work, sent out additional missionaries to take the place of the older workers, who, they thought, must be to blame for the lack of results. The new workers were, therefore, carefully chosen and charged, but after they had been long on the field with the same result, they were more than ever perplexed (Hearing and Doing, XXII, 3, 1907:7).

As late as 1922 a District Officer wrote that the attitude of the Akamba toward the missions "is not necessarily antagonistic, but it is certainly not one of enthusiasm, and it may well be doubted if the local missions will ever bring the Akamba in large numbers into the fold" (Munro 1975:104).

The same can be said of the Nandi and others in Kenya. The Church Missionary Society settled among the Nandi in 1909. The missionaries learned the language and gathered Nandi boys in a class for learning.

After several years these CMS missionaries made the following conclusion. "The Nandi were a wild undisciplined tribe and very little progress was made during

the two and a half years of preparatory work. but given time I believe they would have responded to our efforts for their good..." Their opinion was that "ten years of hard work would be necessary before any impression would be made upon the Nandi" (Church Missionary Society n.d.).

Roman Catholics and Presbyterians likewise reported slow progression those early days among the Gikuyu and Meru.

No doubt those early missionaries would be astounded to read the observation of David Barrett 75 years later. He speaks of "instantaneous acceptance of the Gospel" in Kenya. "Wherever the Word of God - the preaching of the Good News - went amongst the animistic tribal populations of Kenya, the response was instantaneous, immediate and enormous" (Barrett 1973:167). Statistics can often mislead. Barrett maintains that the Christian community doubled, sometimes every three years. If you begin with two converts in three years, that means 24 are converted after twelve years. That cannot be called "instantaneous, immediate and enormous."

We simply do not find any evidence that the Kenyans had found true faith in God through African Traditional Religion. The response of Cornelius to the preaching of Peter was totally different from the response of the Kenyans. There is no evidence that the Kenyans had known God in faith and obedience before the coming of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

The future destiny of those without the Gospel is in the hands of God who is just and merciful. But God has given us no hope of their salvation unless the Gospel is preached to them.

Therefore, we are greatly responsible to carry the gospel to those who have never heard the gospel. First, Christ commanded us to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Secondly, men apart from Christ are lost, for "how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14). Let us rest in the knowledge that God will do what is right. Let us respond in obedience to take the good news to all peoples.

REFERENCES CITED

- Africa Inland Mission. *Hearing and Doing*, Volumes I-XXI, 1898-1916. Mission Periodical of the Africa Inland Mission.
- Alexander, Joseph Addison. *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Two volumes complete in one). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1952 (reprint of third edition, 1875).

- Anderson, J.N.D. *Christianity and Comparative Religion*. London: Tyndale Press, 1970.
- Barrett, David B. *Kenya Churches Handbook*. Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1973.
- Bavinck, J.H. *The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948.
- Buis, Harry. *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1957.
- Buswell, James Oliver. *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1979.
- Church Missionary Society. "Notes on the Commencement of the Nandi Mission." Mimeographed document from Church Missionary Society, Maseno. Archives off Africa Inland Mission, Nairobi.
- The General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. *The Book of Confessions*. New York: The United Presbyterian Church, 1970
- Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology* (in three volumes). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1952.
- Ironside, H.A. *Lectures on the Book of Acts*. New York: Loizeaux Bros., 1943.
- Jackson, Samuel Macauley ed. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959.
- Munro, J. Forbes. *Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands, 1889-1939*. London: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Shedd, William G.T. *Dogmatic Theology* (in three volumes). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, n.d. (Classic Reprint Edition of 1888 edition).

ADVERTISING

A NEW BOOK

**A Biblical Approach to
Marriage and Family in Africa**

**Published by the Theological Advisory Group,
of the Africa Inland Church, Kenya**

This 223 page textbook contains chapters on:

- **Traditional Marriage Customs in Africa**
- **A Biblical Theology of Christian Marriage**
- **Choosing a Spouse for Marriage**
- **Main Features of a Christian Marriage in Africa:
Engagement, Dowry, Wedding Ceremony and Feast**
- **The Christian Family**
- **Special Issues Related to Christian Marriage
Family Planning, Renewal of Weddings, Polygamy,
Marriage of Widows and Widowers, Single Parents,
Separation, Divorce and Remarriage, The Single State**
- **Pastoral Counseling of Troubled Marriages
Problems include childlessness, separation from one
another, wife beating, finances and child rearing.**

**Books cost \$5.50, including shipping and handling, or \$27.00 for a
package of five books. Books may be ordered from
Keswick Bookshop, PO Box 10242, Nairobi, Kenya.**

Practical Theology and Mission: A Case of Sexual Abuse of Children and the Challenge of Evangelism

E.M. Uka

Secular society has brought to the public's attention in the 1970's the serious problem of child sexual abuse in our contemporary world. While non-Christians have championed the cause of protecting children from abuse, Dr. Uka observes that only the Christian Church can bring true healing for a child who has suffered traumatic abuse. The Gospel is holistic in its application to all of life. The practical application of theology to the needs of the weak and defenseless means that the Church should take this problem seriously. Child sexual abuse should be addressed by the churches and their leaders in order to bring healing and redemption of the Gospel to our fallen societies.

INTRODUCTION

It was not until the 1970's that child sexual abuse was acknowledged as a serious social problem worthy of public attention. Although studies on the prevalence of child molestation had been carried out as far back as the late 1920's, the research did not receive much attention at that time.¹ The Church has, however, been aware of the evils of an unconverted soul and had been preaching against all forms of sins at any time. Child sexual abuse might be quite old in human society but the awareness of its existence and the rate of its prevalence is current especially in societies with taboos against sexual immorality within the kin-group.

It was the Women's Movement and Child Protection legislation that brought issues of rape and child abuse to the public view. In 1974, the Child Protective Movement lobbied and succeeded to have the American Congress pass the Child Abuse Prevention Act, mandating mental health workers and educators to assist in the detection and reporting of child sexual abuse.

The Bible, on the contrary, is replete with cases of abuse of God's gifts by man whose heart is corrupted by sin. Sexual perversion and abuse had been noticed early in human society as recorded in Genesis 6:5 when "the sons of God began to commit sexual sins with daughters of men" and God was angry with them. Paul also identified similar cases of sexual perversion in the imperial city of Rome (Rom. 1:18ff) and went on to condemn perpetrators of such evil. He

went further to warn Timothy that sexual sins would be among the acts which would manifest the extent of man's alienation from God in the last days (2 Tim. 3).

Although the awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse may be relatively new in secular society, the church, basing her authority on the Bible, has never been silent on her condemnation of sexual sin. The Bible, which is God's Word for man, has been the source of her information on God's views about everything. With the authority bequeathed to her by her Lord and Saviour, the Church has acted on behalf of Jesus Christ as the "Defender of the oppressed", the "voice of the voiceless" and the "Protector of the helpless" in every age and society. In our own period that is fast going materialistic, there is an urgent need for the church to step up her crusade against evil because of the rapid technological growth and development that threatens the existence of human life on earth.

Since the secular authorities have shown a lot of interest in the eradication of child sexual abuse (though belatedly), the church, which has pioneered the crusade against such evil, should in these "last days" review her strategy and role as a practical aspect of her message of salvation. Therefore the main thrust of this paper is the church's new role and effort in the campaign against the evil of child sexual abuse. It is relevant to all involved in the practical "ministry of making men whole" - be they clergymen, doctors, social workers, police and other law enforcement agents, counsellors, teachers, parents, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and all those interested in the general welfare of human life. The Church's clearer vision of this mission will give a spiritual guideline to their agencies involved in the programme. In other words, this paper will add the theological dimension to the on-going crusade to rid the society of the evil of child abuse.

The Church's approach to practical challenges to faith in a fast-changing world falls within the premises of Practical Theology. Its scope in our own time should be widened to tackle all dehumanising problems that militate against living a practical Christian life here and now. All sinful habits that defile the individual should be properly examined within the areas of Practical Theology. The Christian faith is both "spiritual" and also "practical". We must relate our faith to the contemporary problems of our world. God and his Word are relevant to our situation at any time. The Bible offers answers to every human problem. The Church in her modern evangelical outreach should reflect theologically on the nature of Christian hope and the practical pastoral responsibility of communicating the Gospel to the contemporary decadent society. Solution to the problem of child sexual abuses should be sought within the context of Christian evangelism and mission to the sin-sick world.

Since an organised research into the problem of sexual abuse of children is relatively new, well documented results were centred in industrialised places like the United States, Canada, Sweden and the Netherlands.ⁱⁱ African societies have not been privileged to receive detailed and organised survey of the incidence and prevalence of the problem of sexual abuse of children. There are possible reasons for this neglect of study. One is the long-established incest taboos in many traditional African societies which was carried over into Christian era. Since many Africans still live with this long established tradition, they think that sexual abuse of children is non-existent or probably minimal. But this is not completely true. Secondly, Africans are not literate enough to document all known cases of child sexual abuse that are reported and consequently no one can speak authoritatively with viable and reliable statistical data. We shall, therefore, no longer think that the problem does not exist in African societies.

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

Sexual abuse is of different forms and shapes, but for the purposes of this investigation, it would be understood as the exploitation of young children under the age of sixteen by paedophiles, older adults or peers. It may be a form of taking advantage of helpless and weak children for personal sexual satisfaction in any form. The abuse might be through seduction or as a mark of Oedipus Complex theory of Freud.ⁱⁱⁱ Seduction takes the form of false enticement with gifts like money, clothes, promises of opportunities for higher education, promotion or offer of jobs. Some abuse may take the form of forceful coercion- "rape", kiss and exposure to prostitution and pornography, and any other way that can ruin the moral and physical life of a child. In other words, any form of manipulation of an under-aged or underprivileged child for personal selfish sexual advantage of the perpetrator is an abuse.

Both male and female children are likely victims of sex abuse. It affects children across all racial, religious and socio-economic groups. However, girls are known to be on the higher risk level than boys. For instance, a survey conducted in 1990 confirmed that one in every three to four girls and one in every ten boys have been sexually victimised before the age of eighteen.^{iv} Men are vastly over represented as perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Finkelhor, for instance, discovered in a recent survey he conducted with his team, in which they sampled 1,481 women and 1,145 men, that men constituted 98% of the offenders against girls while 83% of the offenders against boys were women.^v Women are known to torture young maids physically or hire them out to older men for money which is paid directly to them (the women) and a part of the sum given to the "victim" for basic maintenance- food and clothing and medical care which is often poor. Some men abuse young girls (rape) and boys (homosexuality). Some informants have reported of some forms of obscure

types of abuse. One is the type of corporal punishment in which parents or older adults apply red pepper on the sexual organs of little children caught in immoral sexual acts. Other adults subject little children to the ordeal of flogging their genitalia as a mark of strong discipline.

INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE

Random surveys as well as controlled community surveys have shown enormous variables in the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse of children in both Africa and the West. Though peculiar in their ways and types, the abuses do not differ tremendously from one another. The variation in prevalence is a function of the way one defines sexual abuse -either involving physical contact or non-contact sexual experience and exposure, geographical location, exposure, etc. As already stated, it must be emphasized that, since the problem of sexual abuse runs across all racial, religious and socio-economic groups, it is a general human enemy.

For instance, community surveys carried out in some industrialised countries indicate that sexual abuse is not more common among people of a lower social class or less common in higher economic strata. Both children of the rich and poor are potential victims of sexual abuse. However, some reported cases show a disproportionate number of children from the lower social class, primarily due to poverty which exposed them to force rape or lured into lewd sexual acts or relationships. In such a case they become victims of circumstances. The rich might shield their children most of the time from sudden attack by paedophiles. Ethnicity and religion like social class are not risk factors for sexual abuse of children in community-based surveys. A Christian child is as exposed as a Muslim or an unbeliever. This goes to confirm that sexual abuse is a common enemy of stable and decent human society and demands all hands on deck in the crusade against it.

The church's special and privileged position in society could be effectively used in this task. Consequently, many people, even non-Christians, expect the Church to lead in this battle. If the church is going to lead in it, she needs to be aware of the strength of her enemy as well as God's abundant resources ("whole armour") at her disposal in the battle ahead (Eph. 6:10-18).

Except the gender issue, there is no specific demographic variables that can be identified as risk factors for sexual abuse of children. However, it is important for a Christian to understand certain features relating to family structures which need special attention in the bid to prevent sexual child abuse.

First, young girls who are sent out early in life to serve as "nannies" or "house-helps" in urban centres are exposed to a lot of danger. Young girls leaving their parents to serve people living in urban centres are often sent out early in the morning to hawk wares for their mistresses at motor parks, railway stations, sports-studio or squares where people gather. The hawkers stay out all day till night except when they return to refill their trading trays for more wares. Some mistresses and masters do not do this as a form of punishment but as a source of increasing family income. Some parents at times send their own children to do this type of work which can be likened to child labour. Some of the children become exposed to the danger of rape.

Secondly, the presence of step-fathers and brothers in a house-hold or that of older domestic servants from different backgrounds has more often than not been a source of danger particularly to girls. Although cases of this type are not very common in many African societies because of the long-established incest-taboo laws, they are, nonetheless, not totally absent. A recently concluded survey by Russell confirmed that girls growing with their step-fathers were over seven times more likely to be abused by them than girls growing with their natural fathers. Common in Africa is the problem of a young girl living with her married elder sister. She often becomes a "secret" or "illegal second wife" to her brother-in-law, especially when the sister is frequently out of the house on business and leaves her younger sister to run the home as a house-help. Men who are involved in this type of crime are those of low moral character. Thirdly children living without their mothers or without one or both parents, living in broken homes, are at a greater risk of abuse, either within or outside the family.

The nature of sexual abuse, the secrecy and shame surrounding it, the criminal prohibition against it, and the helpless youthful age as well as the dependent status of the victims inhibit voluntary disclosure.^{vi} Parents and teachers who are very close to children should therefore watch when a child is not behaving properly or suffering from some uncomfortable pains. The nature of the abuse is as varied as its prevalence. Some female victims as well as male victims admitted that they had experienced actual or attempted intercourse. They include those who were raped or lured into "child prostitution" in hotels and brothels. Boys are less likely to be on the sibling abused class, more likely to be forcefully abused and more frequently subjected to anal abuse especially by older pupils, guardians, mentors, troop leaders, teachers or captains and coaches of clubs and organisations of the youth.

Extra-familial sexual abuse is more common than intra-familial abuse among boys and girls. This is mainly due to the close-knit nature of African families and the traditional condemnation of incest. Men are generally over-represented in the evils of child sexual abuse. For instance, Finkelhor's survey

reported of male offenders being more than female offenders against either boys or girls. Most of the offenders were ten or more years older than their victims but boys were more likely to be abused by young offenders most of whom are adolescents.^{vii} Women's sexuality is shrouded in secrecy. Only in modern times have cases been reported of "privileged women" who are corrupt and depraved who manipulate young handsome boys and lure them into immoral sex acts, boys young enough to be their children! They also seduce girls into acts of lesbianism. Such women are still rare because of long established inhibitions of women sexuality.

EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Research has shown the principal effects of the abuse on the victim. One is immediate and the other is a long-term effect. The immediate may include physical wounds, bruises or pain on a young victim who was forcefully assaulted and abused. Both the immediate and ultimate long-term effects leave physical and spiritual marks on the victim. Young girls often report of having their genitalia torn, especially the hymen if there was a real struggle to penetrate. They might bleed profusely. Some have been shown to have contracted Sexually Transmitted Disease (S.T.D.). In some cases unwanted teenage pregnancies and abortions have been registered. The long-term effect has something to do with traumatic and spiritual experiences that might last throughout life if not handled with strong prayers and counselling. A sense of guilt and shame, self-pity and self-blame might continue to plague a victim. Bitterness, rage or aggressive behaviour might as well be a result of the abuse of childhood purity, innocence and self-esteem. In about sixty sampled cases, a very broad range of behavioural difficulties and abnormalities were noticed in sexually abused children. Such difficulties were not far too different from the observations of similar surveys conducted in other places by C Cosentino, H.F.L. Meyer-Bahlburg and other members of their team.^{viii}

Although their survey was carried out among American and Canadian children, we noticed similar problems when compared with the results from the survey among Tanzanian, Ghanaian and Nigerian children.^{ix} Among the sexualised behaviour patterns were open and compulsive masturbation, seductive behaviour (especially in growing girls), sexualised play with dolls and age-inappropriate knowledge. A few parents reported of sexual aggression among boys who were victims of such abuse sometime in their early childhood. Twenty-five cases of outstanding problems of cross-gender identity conflict and complex (wishing to be the opposite sex), were overtly manifested in a particular social welfare centre among children of school age who had been previously abused. Cross-gender behaviour was a feature of a few young girls who were victims of sexual abuse in a Safari Centre in Tanzania who fell victims by some

foreign tourists. The girls started behaving like boys, dressing up and harassing other girls as if they would like to have sexual intercourse with them just like boys do.

Some parents of such children had reported of anxiety and post-traumatic stress in the victims, still persisting some years after the incident. These are expressed in such overt actions like fear, (in the dark and lonely places - especially by those raped in dark places), night-mares and sleep disturbances. Some reports gleaned from psychiatric hospitals in Ghana showed evidence of children who manifested internalised psychopathological traits like depression, mood disturbances, and low self-esteem. All these are not found in one single individual victim but they are the traits exhibited by those who had been abused. One may exhibit one trait or two as the case may be.

Other factors that determine response were the age of the victim, the nature and time of abuse, the intensity of the abuse and the type of attention given after the abuse. In other words, the intervening variabilities of the manifestations of the experience of the sexually abused children were dependent on a number of factors. For instance, an abuse that was carried out by someone close to a child - either a stepfather or brother or even a natural father and an uncle etc., can leave a victim in fear of staying or sleeping alone with an adult at night in a room. The one whose abuse involved real sexual intercourse that was violent or forceful had increased trauma. Lack of parental support at the point of disclosure of the incident and the degree of self-blame or self-pity also lead to increased symptoms of depression in victims. Boys and girls have surprisingly responded in similar ways in a number of cases of reported abuse.

However, obvious and noticeable differences in response have been observed in the reactions of both sexes. This again is a factor of a number of variables. Although there is insufficient number of boys who openly admit or report of sexual abuse, both boys and girls examined in the survey that produced this work responded to similar experiences in similar ways- stress-related symptoms, etc. For instance, girls are at a greater risk of abuse than boys and the response gathered through a series of interviews, examination of police reports and records of social workers, showed similar psychopathological manifestations. The general treatment of a combination of psycho-analytic and cognitive behavioural techniques have contributed positively to improvement of self-esteem, social behaviour and self-identity in both sexes. Invariably when the Gospel message is applied to both sexes, the miracle could be wonderful. Here lies the hope of a theologian.

Those maids abused by their "masters" have the tendency to exhibit more serious behavior problems than non-abused children with no psychiatric out-patient history. Symptoms of anxiety, depression, academic and behaviour problems as already stated were reported by a few teachers in Nigeria who happen to encounter such children who were victimised sometime. Such sexually abused "nannies" seem to exhibit a greater tendency of sexual aggression or seductive behaviour which may put them at a greater risk of revictimization. Some of the girls tend to be attracted to any older adult in an attempt to get attention because they are used to be "bed-mates" of older men who abused them early in life. A few male victims, to some extent, tried to reassert their masculine power and resentment through aggression, destructive or disobedient behaviour while depressive behaviour symptoms were more obvious in girls.

Psychotherapy is all right because it has its own role, yet there is a vacuum, a feeling of emptiness which only the Christian Gospel and message of salvation can satisfy. Christian theology has not worked out an elaborate and detailed methodological approach to the treatment of the sexually abused children in the way socio-psychology and therapists have done and that is why it seems to have occupied a great attention in the above discussion. The cleansing power of the gospel which clears the victim of the guilt of self-pity and self-blame needs to be made clear to him/her from the Bible. The follow-up stage of reintegration should come to clear the victim of the guilt which is capable of incapacitating him/her for life. The power that can declare the freedom of God lies not in psychology but in Christianity as expressed in the gospel. To this we turn now to in the next section as a practical theological discourse for the healing of a victim. Paul's emphatic message in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is clear on the punishment of those involved in sexual sin. Other passages exist. In recognition of the content of the Bible and its stand on practical life issues, the role of the Church can be worked out without necessarily going into the in-depth analysis of the physiology of human existence or the anatomy of human body.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHALLENGE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Although the incidence and prevalence of sexual abuse of children might be quite old in human society, the awareness of its existence is definitely new to many people. The Bible is clear on its condemnation of sexual immorality, particularly fornication, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution and other sex perversions. Yet there is no specific verse of the Bible condemning child sexual abuse. It is, nonetheless, one of the sexual sins that would exclude the perpetrators from the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11). In today's world, sexual

abuse of children is not only seen as a social evil and crime but also as a sin against God and divine principles. No wonder many people including non-Christians are engaged in a serious battle against it. The secular society has got a very detailed legislation against it in municipal law. Many agencies are seriously seeking a solution to it without even consulting the Church.

Invariably, some of the agencies currently engaged in the crusade to eradicate sexual abuse of children are manned by individuals who are committed to a life of faith in Jesus Christ. Thus their faith in Christ has unconsciously influenced their condemnation of an act that is not only sinful but also criminal and dehumanising. The Church through such members who have experienced the saving power of Jesus Christ should be involved in the same campaign for a total war on the danger which sexual abuse of children poses in society. Professionals like the Christian lawyer, Christian medical officer, Christian social welfare worker, Christian counsellor, Christian policeman, Christian clinical psychologist or Christian psychiatrist should act in concert with the clergyman who acts as the fulcrum on whom the contributions of other workers revolve. The church will not reject the contribution and methods of any agency provided such contributions and methods are not anti-God. She will need to decipher which of the methods and approaches will best fit into the Biblical injunctions and beliefs. It is unchristian to adopt any approach to render psychological normalcy to a patient if the method wrenches the heart of the Christian Gospel.

The Bible is clear on sin, repentance and salvation. Those involved in sexual immorality seem to be sin-sick and under the control of Satan. The Church should, therefore, not leave the protection and healing of sexually abused children only to the secular social welfare workers, psychologists, lawyers, medical doctors, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists who may claim to have elaborate intellectual knowledge of the physical and psychological make-up of man. The theologian may not be an accomplished psychologist but he is the interpreter of the Word of God where he who made man has expressed his views and carefully laid down divine rules for a healthy life. Besides, the Psalmist fully acknowledged the unfathomable wisdom of God as the greatest scientist (Ps. 139:13-16). The Bible has fully accounted for God's interest in the cause of the weak and poor and has consistently championed their cause. The Church should therefore, not keep silent on such moral and social evils like the sexual abuse of young children. Preaching is not enough. There is need to complement the roles of the other workers in society who are trying to build a clean and morally just and stable society.

Preventive measures are numerous. The theoretical analysis of the incidence and prevalence of the sexual abuse of children made at the early part

of this study can be studied by a theologian as a preliminary step to the general understanding of the intricacies of the problem before a spiritual biblical solution is sought. If this is accepted by a theologian, he will then first intensify his Christian teaching on salvation of the individual as the first principles of practical Christian approach to the prevention of the crime. The teaching will help to heal both the victim and his/her attacker who also needs spiritual healing. One who is "sin-sick" and whose life is being controlled by the powerful evil forces can do any base and immoral thing. Sexual abuse of children is just a manifestation of the thoughts and minds which are not right with God.

Beginning with the victim first, a department of children's evangelism needs to be designed and developed by a very committed theologian. The name is not important but it should be a department that would be responsible for Bible Study and Christian religious programmes for children. It may be called Sunday School Department or Children's Evangelism Department or Ministry or any other name that a church chooses to call it. Through such ministries, children are made to know early in life God's view and position on matters of sexual immorality and other things necessary for salvation. The content of Proverbs 22:6 is still a timeless injunction from God. Well-trained teachers of the Bible whose Christian faith is not in doubt should be employed to be role models and character builders of the children in the church. Those who had been caught or known to have committed crime against children should never be involved in this type of programme. Children of different ages should be separated and some activities should be restricted to gender differences. No rumour of abuse should be ignored. Thorough investigation should be carried out to ascertain the veracity of any allegation or suspicion in order to retain the reputation of the church and the confidence of parents in the programme, so that they might continue to send their wards.

On the side of parents, they should be encouraged to appreciate their divine responsibility of providing both spiritual and physical needs of their children. It is, therefore, important to teach and train children through personal example. Parents should be helped to commit their lives to Christ through a number of Christian activities in a church. A sound Christian theology can be worked out from the Bible by a theologian to look for practical solutions to problems of life. The Bible has a strong and relevant answer to every human problem and the Christian should be directed and helped to find God's divine answers embedded in his Word. Here lies the importance of discussions in the church on social problems from the biblical and Christian perspective. If any parent gives his child a good start in life, the possibility of a morally sound society could be built and the family is the beginning of such a foundation and of any church. The children brought up in a strong Christian family are likely to avoid the lure and false enticement of peers or older adults. If a Christian child

is victimised, his or her strong faith in the Lord already built up can prompt him or her to report the case immediately for prompt treatment and such a child recovers faster and escapes the traumatic effect of the abuse in later years than is the case with children who do not know the Lord. A recent survey of children has shown that 30% who are from a strong Christian background and faith responded favourably to treatment faster than the others without a strong Christian faith and hope.

In addition to preaching, prayer should be intensified, for the life of a child shattered by the awful experience of sexual abuse. That of the paedophile should be rebuilt because it is also shattered by sin. Any known paedophile could be given an organised series of teaching and counselling sessions arranged by the church. It is not out of place for a church to ring up the police and social welfare department to arrange the arrest and confinement and treatment of hardened and unrepentant paedophiles for the safety of the children within an area. The church can engage the services of Christian lawyers and policemen to arrest and confine such dangerous people in places where they could be monitored and properly treated. This is already happening in some developed countries.

An elaborate programme of rehabilitation and reintegration of healed victims of sexual abuse should be developed by the church as a part of the whole ministry of the church. By this ministry, a strong follow-up programme should be organised to help clear both female and male victims of child sexual abuse of the sense of guilt and shame that usually torment a victim even years after the event. A practical teaching and ministration should emphasize that when a child becomes a Christian he/she should learn to forgive self and others, including those who attacked him/her. We shall later come to this point because of the problems which develop later in life from a lack of forgiveness. Some become overly aggressive in attacking others sexually in order to retaliate terrible experiences in childhood. Others experience depression, leading to frigidity and fear of sex, because they have not totally forgiven and forgotten a bitter experience of the past.

In many communities, the church serves as a centre of both social and spiritual activities where people often gather regularly for one programme or the other. Known paedophiles within a community, no matter who they are, should be denied access to close contacts with children. In homes, proven cases of incestuous fathers, stepfathers or uncles should be removed from the home and referred for individual or group psychotherapy and behavioural intervention. A church that enlists the support and permission of law enforcement agents can carry out this type programme more easily than any other group or individual because of the unique and special position that the church occupies in society.

A church counselling team should be mobilised to assist in homes run by social welfare organisations and other N.G.O.'s where victims of sexually abused children are treated and rehabilitated or where perpetrators of such crimes are given psychotherapy. The presence of the church is important to supply the spiritual element which is lacking in the package of therapy which the secular agencies offer.

A theologian who is versed and learned in Scriptures will know how to fit into such programmes and that is one of the challenges of Practical Theology- the ability to participate in secular events yet holding the power of the Gospel and making it shine in dark places. Practical Theology adds a divine face to every human activity, be it in industry, school, hospital, commerce, bank or games. In such homes the prayer and counselling team of the church, properly trained by their pastor, will support the therapy offered by the secular agencies with strong Christian teaching and prayers. Here lay chaplains trained by the church are found useful by the church to render a twenty-four hour ministry, even when the pastor is away on other assignments of the church. If the church is not strong financially to carry out an independent project, she can send trained Christian workers to assist as volunteers in government-sponsored or N.G.O.'s programmes. The ability to participate in an unobtrusive manner is a mark of Christian humility and virtue.

The ultimate goal of every treatment is to ensure that the shattered life of an abused child is rebuilt and also to ensure the child's safety from additional attack and molestation. This is where the church again should act as the custodian of every child, particularly those from poor homes where parents can not afford to provide protective measures. Parents should be taught the dangers of giving of their young children as nannies or house-helpers. Besides, a child who has been treated physically and psychologically still needs a strong Christian teaching of love, repentance, forgiveness and salvation.

We have mentioned this point earlier but it is important to underline it as a part of the practical, theological contribution to the programme of total healing of a child after an abuse. When a child or young person has been assured of his or her salvation, the guilt or self-blame or self-pity will clear. Grudge and anger block the chances of a happy heart. When some one is a Christian or offers his/her life to Christ in sincerity, the old things are washed away. This is where Paul's statement becomes relevant and appropriate. When one becomes a Christian, the one becomes a brand new person (2 Cor. 7:17), the old is past and the new sets in. The cleansing power in the blood of Jesus Christ is available to all who believe and an ex-victim of an abuse appropriates the promises of God, when he/she truly accepts Christ, the one has nothing to fear

again. A new life has set in. A new Lord and Master has been accepted and new loyalty is expected.

The Church must emphasize the unique privilege of a believer to all new converts. The assurance of salvation to a young believer by a highly anointed man of God representing the Church and the Lord himself is of immense value to the health of a healed victim of the sexually abused. A victim who becomes a Christian during the process or soon after the therapy will be made to accept the abundant promises reserved for him in Christ as a result of the new faith. The acceptance of biblical promises and obedience to the stipulations of forgiving one's enemies, even the attacker and one's self, will inevitably bring healing to the victim. The nightmares and trauma of the past incident will clear away and new joy will fill one's heart. A sincere faith in Jesus clears the feeling of self-blame and self-pity. Self-blame has often been used by unrepentant and unconverted victims of sexual child abuse in later years as a justification for the overwhelming feeling of powerlessness in relation to adults. Blaming one-self reinforces the child's sense of being "damaged goods", stigmatised or responsible for the abuse. A child who offers his/her life to Christ should, therefore, see oneself as a complete brand new person, washed in the blood of Christ. He/she should begin to live a life of hope and faith in God. The church is given the authority to declare this freedom and forgiveness to a truly repentant and converted person as a part of "making one whole" for the Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

No matter how weak we might be, however marred, spoiled or brutalised, every human being is made in the image of God and made for eternity. Our true human dignity is revealed in our appreciation of the fact that we are God's own creatures, made in his image. It is important that theology reminds man of this unique privilege, that he is a true image of God. The church's role in the "Ministry of Healing" is to recapture the "wholeness" in man which is often defaced or tainted when sin touches him. A *holistic theology* of healing incorporates all the contributions of other agencies and unifies them into the spiritual "whole" in Christ. That is how "recreation, salvation, redemption and wholeness" become an aspect of Practical Theology. This involves the process of taking a human being back to his original image of God which is polluted by any particle of sin.

So on realisation of the prevalence of the crime of sexual abuse of children in our contemporary society, the church should, as a matter of divine responsibility, include a programme that would make her ministry cover it as an important service. This is because any other form of therapy which doctors, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists offer still does not touch that aspect of

human life where the image of God is entrenched. It is the Church's ministration that repaints and restores the image to its normal brightness when it is defaced. In the recent past, it is the secular social agencies that have mapped out an elaborate programme for the treatment, prevention, and protection of children from child abuse. A theologian should have access to the current attempts of other welfare agencies interested in human health and blend all their efforts with his divine contribution that validates all other genuine contributions and roles.

Child sexual abuse is not only a serious social problem that affects a large proportion of the society, but is also a great sin against God and man because it tries to stain and deface that image of God in a human being. Treatment efforts of the church and other agencies should help the Church in her own attempt to restore the "dignity of a human being" by redeeming the fading image of God in him. There is need to focus on prevention of further attacks on children. Families and other agencies should help the church in her efforts to protect and preserve the health and life of our children for a better society. Since sexual abuse is a manifestation of a sinful life, Gospel teaching and preaching should be intensified by the church. A life submitted to the Lord will never be involved in such acts that threaten the life of society. Parents and all who love children should not oppose the church's spiritual care of the children and society in her evangelism. The "disease" of this sin will be cured if the Lord Jesus is given his rightful position there. That is the "panacea" to the immorality that is plaguing human life in the world. Theology should relate to the practical problems that plague man here on earth. Herein lies the responsibility of the church in this chaotic age.

End Notes

-
- ⁱ G.V. Hamilton. *A Research in Marriage*. New York: Albert & C. Boni Pub. 1929. See also A.C. Kinsey et.al. *Sexual Behaviour in Human Male*. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953.
- ⁱⁱ E.D. Leuman (ed). *The Social Organization of Sexuality*. Chicago: The University Press. (1994). Cf. R. Badgley et.al. *Sexual Offences against Children*. Ottawa: Canadian Government Pub. Centre, 1984.
- ⁱⁱⁱ M.Krull. *Freud and His Father*. N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986. Chapter 1.
- ^{iv} D. Finkelhor et.al. "Sexual Abuse of Adult Men and Women," *Child Abuse Magazine* 14 (1990), pp. 19-28.
- ^v D. Finkelhor et.al. "High risk children" in D. Finkelhor (ed). *Source book on Child Sexual Abuse*. Beverly Hill Ca. : Sage Pub., 1986, Chapters 2 & 3.
- ^{vi} See S. D. Peters et. al. "Prevalence" in *Source Book on Child Sexual Abuse*, D.Finkelhor (ed) pp. 10-15.
- ^{vii} D.Finkelhor. *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Reason*. N.Y.: Free Press, 1984.
- ^{viii} See C. Cosentino, et. al. "Sexual Behaviour Problems and Psychopathology Symptoms in Sexually-Abused Girls". *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry* ,34 (1995) passim.
- ^{ix} See U.R. Onunwa & Israel Katoka, "Sexual abuse of children in Africa: Causes and Remedies, *JPT* , 15/3 (1994) 20-36.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS IN AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY: A BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

Ernst R. Wendland

The following review of recent books on contextualized Christology has been done by Dr. Ernst R. Wendland, lecturer in the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia. The reader would do well to refer to a previous article published by AJET (volume 10, No. 2, pages 13-32) where the author began his review of authors seeking to contextualize Christology in Africa.

JESUS In African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective
by Kwame Bediako
(Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 1990) 49 pages.

*Jesus Christ Our Muthamaki (Ideal Elder):
An African Christological Study Based on the Agikuyu Understanding of Elder*
by P.N. Wachege
(Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers, 1992) 271 pages.

*Jesus in African Christianity:
Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*
by J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds)
(Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989) 164 pages.

=====

One could not ask for a more diverse set of books to review with respect to both form and content. But as the three titles listed above indicate, they are all basically united as to their central topic and intent, that is, to offer an indigenous, contextualized, or "inculturated", perspective on the significance of Jesus Christ for contemporary African Christianity. I will begin with the briefest and, in my opinion, the best presentation of a context-sensitive Christology.

In his short study of Christ "from a Ghanaian perspective", Kwame Bediako confronts the problem of syncretism and people "living at two levels--half African and half European", who "are uncertain about how the Jesus of the Church's preaching saves them from the terrors and fears which they experience in their traditional world view" (p. 12). The key to his approach is to make a concerted attempt to "relate Christian understanding and experience to the

realm of the ancestors" (p. 12), which he considers to be the cultural focal point of the Akan people (and undoubtedly other Ghanaians as well). Accordingly, he deals with his subject in two concise and thought-provoking chapters, entitled: (1) "Christ and Spirit Power" and (2) "The Lordship of Christ Amid Sacred Power".

In the first unit, Bediako builds upon John Mbiti's notion of "Christus Victor (Christ supreme over every spiritual rule and authority)" (p.8) and proposes that by sovereignty displacing "The mediatorial function of our natural 'spirit fathers' (p. 18), Jesus Christ--who is "Lord over the living and the dead, and over the 'living dead'-- provides a powerful alternative and antidote, as it were, that frees believers from "any terrorising influence they [the ancestors] might be assumed to have over us" (p. 19). To support this case, Bediako draws attention to "the universality of Jesus Christ", who is the Saviour of all people (p. 13), and to what he terms the "adoptive past" of African Christians, who are covenantally joined by faith in Christ through "the Abrahamic link" (p. 14).

In his second chapter Bediako begins by outlining the cultural and religious significance of "Kingship" in Akan society with the Chief playing a "crucial role as the intermediary between the state and the ancestors" (p. 22). The introduction of Christianity has therefore introduced a fundamental conflict "between two authorities-- the Christian Church and the traditional state", one that is based upon "two [different] conceptions of power and differing views as to the source of power" (p. 25). One way of reducing the tension between these two forces in society, Bediako suggests, is to stress the "non-dominating" quality of Christ's "kingdom". This is a principle which, given a proper conception also of its spiritual nature, "ennobles politics itself into a service of our fellow human beings" (p. 29).

Another solution to the problem of both the relevance of Christianity to a specific society and culture and its relationship to the "various powers that be" (Rom. 13:1) is to provide an accurate and appropriate theological basis upon which to build a contextualized Christology. Bediako views the Epistle to the Hebrews as being crucial in this regard, especially in its presentation of Christ's high-priestly, mediatorial role (p. 33). In his excellent, but all too brief treatment of this subject, he discusses the corrective and transforming relationship of Christianity to three key aspects of the Akan religious tradition, namely, the concepts of sacrifice, priestly mediation, and ancestral function. His summary of the total superiority of Christ over the ancient ancestral cult (pp. 38-42) is indeed one of the best that I have read on this subject. This section alone would make anyone's efforts to obtain this little book well worth while!

As someone engaged in the ministry of Bible translation in Africa, I deeply appreciate some of the trenchant observations that Bediako had on this topic in his "concluding observations". In our effort to communicate Christ more effectively today, it is absolutely essential that accurate and meaningful translations be made in the language(s) of the people. Not only is "Christianity...among all religions, the most culturally translatable, hence the most truly universal" (p. 43), but competent renderings of the Word of God offer the opportunity of some creatively dynamic instances of a valid contextualization of the Christian message, e.g. in relation to the "purificatory rituals of Oduwira" (p. 45; cf. Heb. 1:3). Bediako's pointed challenge to the Church is noteworthy:

Hearing the Word of God in our own language, therefore, is not to be sneered at and left to 'illiterates'; rather it is what is required if we seriously seek growth in our understanding of Jesus Christ" (p.44).

How many so-called "Christian" churches in Africa today really make Bible translation a top priority—one that is supported not only by pious professions, but in concrete provision of men (and women), money, and materials?

I had only one major criticism of Bediako's work: his footnotes indicate that only studies prior to 1981 were considered. We look forward to an updating and a considerable expansion of this valuable application of Christology in an African setting!

The second study that I wish to comment on is P. N. Wachege's interpretation of Jesus Christ from the perspective of Gikuyu "Eldership" (*Uthamaki*) in Kenya. This is a very thorough and insightful attempt to inculturate biblical theology in an African setting. In many respects it is a model of how to carry out such studies in other ethnic contexts. Wachege's presentation is divided into two major parts. In the first he offers a rather detailed and well written anthropological survey of the "Agikuyu social and religious way of life" consisting of three chapters. In these he describes many relevant aspects of their historical and social background (1), their notion of "elderhood" within an indigenous world-view (2), and the on-going relevance of this key social institution (3). In the four main chapters which comprise part two, Wachege welds culture with Christology and ecclesiology as he describes the concept of "Elderhood" in the Bible, with particular reference to Christ (4), efforts at inculturation in the Church [largely a Roman Catholic perspective] (5), the various correspondences and contrasts between Agikuyu elderhood and that of Christ (6), and the spiritual, catechetical, and pastoral relevance of this contextualized approach to Christology (7). A short chapter (8) of "general conclusions," a helpful "glossary" of Gikuyu terms, and a substantial bibliography rounds out the book.

I will focus my comments on what I view to be the main strengths and weaknesses of Wachege's Christological application in part two. His survey of "elderhood" in the Old and New Testaments (ch. 4) is useful, but marred in places by certain higher critical notions, e.g. the outmoded JEDP "Source Hypothesis" (pp. 103-4) and doubts concerning the authorship of Luke-Acts (p. 108). Wachege's presentation of the "elder-like roles and qualities manifested by Christ during his earthly ministry (pp. 116ff) is very well done, especially in relation to the "reconciliatory and peace-making activities of Jesus Christ (pp. 121-5) and his "teaching, kingly, cultic and sacerdotal functions" (pp. 139-43). I had difficulties with Wachege's argument for the pastoral primacy of Peter (e.g. pp. 120-1), but fortunately he does not prolong this discussion. In general, I feel that he adequately supports his contention concerning the relevance of the Agikuyu notion of *Uthamaki* to the development of an "inculturated" Christology. I would therefore also agree that "it is justifiable...--according to both the Old and the New Testaments' concept of elderhood plus the [cited] characteristics in the bible (sic) applicable to Jesus Christ--to call Jesus Christ a *muthamaki*, but in a higher and more eminent sense" (p. 146).

Chapter 5 is rather disappointing. It begins with an overview of the major Roman Catholic "magisterial directives" that Wachege cites in support of his effort to "create an *Agikuyu Muthamaki Christology*" (p. 147). The problem here lies in his rationale, namely, that "in order to be truly Christian *this theological reflection must be guided by the Word of God* and by the teaching of the [Roman Catholic] Church... which has to be transmitted in a particular way to the Roman Pontiff and to the Bishops in Communion with him" (pp. 158-9, original italics). The second major difficulty arises in connection with Wachege's description of "various titles and categories [of] Christology" through the ages (pp. 163ff), particularly those emanating in the twentieth century (pp. 171ff). Here he does not clearly distinguish between orthodox approaches (very few unambiguous examples are cited) and those that espouse various heretical, contra-biblical notions, such as the neo-Arianism of Schoonenberg's "Christology from below" (p. 174). Finally, it is disappointing to note the absence of any works by evangelical scholars in the listing of representatives of those propounding various "African Christologies" (pp. 178-9). Must we conclude that none have actually been written? In this section it would have been interesting to learn more about how H. Sawyer's notion of Christ as "The elder Brother par excellence" (p. 179) differs from Wachege's own perspective of elderhood.

Chapter 6 gives the fullest account of Wachege's proposal for a "*Muthamaki Christology*". He makes a good case for this culturally contextualized approach through a detailed, systematic, and diagnostic

presentation of the similarities and differences (to his credit Wachege does not overlook or downplay the latter!) between the two types of "ideal" elderhood--that of traditional Agikuyu society and that of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. However, in this generally reliable and insightful comparative analysis, one must watch out for the occasional questionable or even erroneous assertion. Some of these betray Wachege's ecclesiastical background, while others appear to be the result of an over-enthusiastic assessment of his own ethnic tradition. For example, the alleged supremacy of Simon Peter in the church is rather obtrusively brought into a discussion of the importance of an elder's last will and testament (p. 194-50, 210). Furthermore, a consideration of the supposed sacrificial character of the Eucharist is included in the section entitled "sacrifices and offerings" (pp. 217-9). Turning to an indigenous perspective, one wonders in what sense Wachege regards traditionally-minded Agikuyu elders to be "really godly" with respect to "status and merit" (p. 223), or why he concludes that "Christ was already among the Agikuyu before Christianity came to us by way of the missionaries" (p. 231). In addition, it is not at all apparent in what way the "church is also the sacrament of Christ's elderhood" (p. 241). It is lapses such as these which detract somewhat from the author's otherwise exemplary Christological study.

Similar biases tend to blur the presentation of the author's conclusions with regard to the "pastoral relevance of Agikuyu *Muthamaki* Christology" in chapter 7. It is not entirely clear, for example, how this inculturated approach "provides an invaluable impetus into a new way of doing liberation theology which is spiritually more enriching" (p. 246). It would seem that one would have to begin with a new definition of "liberation theology", one that differs from the humanistically oriented variety described on pages 177 and 196-200. There are also some debatable theological assertions in this section, such as our "moving towards fulfilment in the vitalistic community of the Trinity" (p. 244) through participation in an *Uthamaki* Christology, which is alleged to be "the surest way of entering into Godhead" (p. 248). Biblical theology must naturally be appropriately and dynamically incorporated into the liturgy of the church, but it is going too far to "suggest that the rituals connected with Agikuyu elderhood should be elevated to the level of the sacramentals of the Church" (p. 253). These and other examples illustrate an "inculturation" of another kind, namely, that imposed by one's adopted ecclesiastical traditions. But the preceding criticisms should in no way prevent one from reading and benefiting from Wachege's rich and rewarding Christological study--one that represents a systematic and an insightful reflection on many relevant aspects of Christ's mystery from the Agikuyu sense of elderhood" (p. 255).

The third book on Christology under consideration is collection of essays that were presented at an ecumenical symposium in Nairobi in 1989. *Jesus in African Christianity* is described in the preface as "the first in a series of volumes exploring various aspects of contemporary African Christianity and promoting creative theological reflection amongst African scholars." To be sure, this is a very worthwhile and necessary goal. However, on the basis of this initial volume in the proposed series, I would have to conclude that a great deal of evangelical input needs to be contributed to the enterprise. Furthermore, I would not recommend this book as a valid representative of African and Biblical Christianity, its Christology in particular. Indeed, I wonder whether Jesus would recognise himself and his salvific mission in this text. I have two basic reasons for this openly critical assessment: in terms of its overall aim, it is too "creative", in a radical, syncretistic sense; and at the same time it is not "theological" enough, from a biblical perspective.

One's unease with this volume begins in the very Introduction, where it is proposed that "the limits to theological creativity are endless" (x1v). Certainly that is true if the Scriptures (nowhere mentioned in the context) are ignored as the only source and norm of all church doctrine in any cultural context on earth. Although the essayists undertook to answer the key question: "Who is Jesus Christ for you, Africa?" (x), they were apparently not limited to the Bible in their search for a definitive answer, but were free to find him "in various manifestations of African culture in general: in its myths, rituals, beliefs, symbols, art, and language" (xiv). Thus, although it is claimed that "this book does not, in the main, engage in speculative, abstract theologising" (xv), an evangelical, Scripture-centred reader would come to a different conclusion after completing most of the included essays.

But I should rather allow the different authors to speak for themselves on the subject of Christology and its contextualization in Africa. I will thus select a few potentially controversial quotations from each essay to allow readers of this review to sample the various approaches and to judge for themselves whether my negative judgement of this collection is justified or not. These selections are not necessarily representative of a given author's main theme or interest, but they do suggest how even a good thesis or application can be seriously undermined by an uninformed--or just plain careless--use of the Word of God when dealing with some theological subject, whether in a "contextualizing" manner or not. Of course, my selection is biased in favour of my own opinion and evangelical theological position; therefore, readers are strongly encouraged to test and evaluate these essays for themselves. In fact, I do not wish to discourage a careful reading of this book. It is important that this be done so

that people become aware of the wide "diversity" that is present in African Christology today, and aware of the nature of some of the questionable "experimentation" that is going on (a phrase from the book's sub-title).

In her search for "The hidden Christ in African Traditional Religion," Judith Bahemuka begins with the assumption "that revelation is... a process [which] began at the time of our [African] ancestors... and will never cease" (p. 1). In a sense, then, every culture has the right to determine for itself what constitutes divine revelation; for example: "the African defines his own situation, and it is this situation which can lead one to the discovery of Christ" (p.4). Such culture-based freedom leads to many instances of naturalistic reasoning like the following:

"Christ, the Son of God, is one with the Father. If the father (Yahweh) revealed Himself to Africans, and they responded in faith, why could the same Africans not discover Christ in their 'Acts of Faith'?" (p.9).

Hence it is not surprising that Bahemuka can, for all practical purposes, dispense with the Bible altogether and come to the conclusion that "Christ becomes our brother because the African is [by nature] a child of God [and] this gives him the *right* (original italics) to belong to the royal priesthood" (p. 12).

In his survey of "African Christologies Today," Charles Nyamiti lumps all representatives into "two main types," namely, "those of inculturation and liberation theology" (p. 17). In this useful, but theologically undifferentiating, survey he includes much chaff with the wheat. On the one hand, Nyamiti rightly reaffirms "the importance of Trinitology for any Christology" because "Without the Trinity, Christ Himself (and hence, Christology) would lose His personality and *raison d'etre*" (p.31). But such statements are often coupled with those that are not only conceptually abstract and obscure, e.g.

"...The Holy Spirit is the ancestral ritual Offer (Oblation) and Eucharist between the Father and the Son in the Trinity" (p. 30),

but also patently incorrect from the point of view of accurate biblical exegesis, e.g.

"... the saints in heaven and purgatory are, in different degrees, our ancestors in Christ, ... [and] among these saints are the African ancestors who died in friendship with God" (p. 27).

Thus Nyamiti distorts his argument considerably through his concept of the "Christian ancestorship' of the saints" (loc cit) and related, ecclesiastically coloured notions.

In his search for an answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ for Africans today?" Douglas Waruta advanced the thesis that "a Christology which revolves around the three offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and Potentate is

not only soundly biblical but will be the most comprehensible to African Christians" (p. 44). Unfortunately, he looks more to African theologians such as John Mbiti and Kofi Appia-Kubi than the Bible for an answer. This leads to a rather humanistic, secular description of Christianity:

"It is persons and not ideas or doctrinal tenets which captivate the masses of African people and bring them to faith. ... Africans are not interested in suffering through their problems now while waiting for the bliss of heaven. ... Africans want a leader who shows them the way to liberation now—liberation from disease, oppression, hunger, fear and death" (pp. 50-1).

Waruta claims that "this type of Jesus is the one presented in the Gospels" (p.51)—perhaps, but only if one skips over the final third or so of each evangelist's record, namely, that which details the events of "holy week" and beyond.

In his effort to portray "Christ as seen by an African" (p. 54), Zablon Nthamburi briefly outlines an argument for his "Anthropocentric Christology", contrasted with "Theocentric Christology" which he alleges creates a "Schizophrenic community" of Christians who are too preoccupied with their 'spiritual' welfare" (p. 55). Thus Nthamburi seeks to "concentrate on the functions of Christ rather than on His person" (loc cit). But undue emphasis on one or other of these two aspects inevitably leads in an unorthodox direction. How does the following, for example, differ from a contextualized Arianism or Adoptionism?

"By virtue of being a direct offspring of God, Jesus becomes our *Mudzimu* with powers of intercession. ... The act of God becoming flesh removes any dichotomy between humanity and divinity in our own experiences" (pp. 56-7).

In the end we are left, as so often in these essays, with the jargon of "liberation theology" and its predictable, unrealistic, and typically hyperbolic exhortations, e.g. "We should not forget that the only way in which we can understand Christ is through concrete historical experience of God's action which is always a liberating experience" (p. 58).

It is indeed interesting to compare contemporary, culturally syncretistic efforts at contextualization with "Christology in the East Africa Revival Movement" earlier this century (p.60). A historical and theological overview of the latter is provided by Hannah Kinoti, in what is perhaps the most helpful of all the essays contained in *Jesus in Africa*. What motivated and guided these early Christians in their efforts to make the Bible and Jesus Christ more meaningful and relevant in their lives? Kinoti contends that it was their predominant "focus on Christ and his cross [which] meant a fresh understanding about sin, repentance, salvation, Christian fellowship, evangelism and daily victorious

living" (p. 67). The spiritual (as distinct from worldly) "power of the cross" enables believers to discover and apply "the melting power of love" in their lives (p. 69), to seek the "place of humility" in one's dealings with fellow human beings (p. 70), and to find a "place of rest" in the midst of all the trials and troubles of this world (p. 71-2), including ostracization, persecution, and even death (p. 73). Indeed, here was "liberation" of a different sort, one that in its own quiet but persistent way managed to "[bring down] blockades of colour, class, status, ethnicity, sex and education, [and to merge] pulpit and pew" (p. 73).

After the rewarding experience provided by Kinoti's contribution, Laurenti Magassa returns us to exegetical controversy and the popular current brand of liberation in his essay entitled, "Christ the Liberator and Africa Today". Here "the Christ-Event, that act of salvation or redemption of the human race by Christ" is described in typically limited and limiting socio-political terms such as "liberty, the happiness of every human person, the breaking of every kind of chain that binds humanity--in a word, humanity's emancipation" (p. 82). The solution then is not really Christ, but powerful ecclesiastical (?) forces that would destroy the "state of peripheral capitalism" that binds "the entire Southern hemisphere", and put an end to "the unbalanced socio-economic and political relationship between the economic North and South" (p. 84). Magassa can distinguish "no difference" between Christ's spiritual and material concerns, for "He was concerned about nothing other than building bridges of friendship and dignity among people" (p. 88). The work of salvation ("soteriology") therefore involves an on-going, synergistic effort between Jesus and human beings which proceeds in "integrated movements towards the perfection of the eschaton to be effected by Christ" (p. 90). According to the liberationist agenda of Magassa and others, such a "struggle to overcome everything which condemns... [people] to remain on the margin of life" is "evangelization"-- "the very core of the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ Himself and His mission" (p. 91). We recall the crucial query from this book's introduction: "Who is Jesus Christ for you, Africa?" (x). It becomes ever clearer that the answer one gives will depend on just exactly where one is looking and how. Where the attesting record of Scripture itself is ignored, or is contorted to fit the mold of some secularised methodology, it is no wonder that spiritually voided responses can predominate.

John Waliggo's essay, "African Christology in a situation of suffering" is no different. After a survey of the "nature of suffering" (pp. 94ff) and "major aspects of suffering in Africa" (pp. 98ff), Waliggo advances what he considers to be "the root-cause of Africa's many-fold sufferings" (p. 100). Somewhat surprisingly, this turns out to be "*rejection*, both by powerful outsiders and powerful insiders" (p. 101). Not surprising, however, is Waliggo's assertion that

"Western Christianity" has been the greatest source of such suffering (pp. 101-2), but he goes on to include "the majority of African theologians... among the 'rejecters' of their own people" because they tend to "concentrate on theological academic gimmicks which are at the periphery of people's living experience of suffering and hoping" (p. 103). Waliggo feels that "the theme of rejection... becomes very important and indeed central in the entire biblical message" (p. 104). "Important", yes, one might grant that, but certainly not "central" in comparison with alternatives like "reconciliation" or "substitution", to mention just two possibilities.

A breath of fresh air is provided in Peter Kanyandogo's "biblical reflection on the exercise of pastoral authority in the African churches". The author first overviews the imagery of "God as a shepherd" in the Old and New Testaments (pp. 113-4) as well as usage of the Greek terms *dunamis* ('power') and *eksousia* ('authority') (pp. 114-5) in order to lay a foundation for "a few general points that must characterise the exercise of pastoral power in Christian communities" (p. 116). There is nothing exactly new here, but the message is worth reiterating none the less:

"As a shepherd, [the pastor] is to have special concern for people who have difficulties or have gone astray. ... A Christian leader exercises power in a spirit of service, simplicity, humility and compassion" (p.117).

The problems in Africa are compounded by the general lack of qualified pastors as well as by a laity who are not suitably trained to carry out certain pastoral functions (p. 118). Occasions of the abuse and misuse of power and authority by the leadership only add to the difficulty (pp. 119-20). The overall need for integrity, commitment, and flexibility in the area of pastoral ministry is not limited to Africa of course; it is a growing crisis facing the Christian Church almost everywhere in the world.

We shift perspectives somewhat in the study of "Christology and an African woman's experience" by Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike. In general, this is a useful survey of a subject that has been so long neglected in the Church, especially the section on "Jesus and women in the gospels" (pp. 126ff). There are a few traditional as well as modern biases that crop up toward the end however, such as the syncretistic notion that "the African woman ... needs the Christ who relates to God, the God who can be reached through the spirits and the living dead or through direct intercession" (p. 130). On the other hand, radical liberationism again displaces biblical theology in the flow of the author's African feminist discussion:

"In her undertaking against the oppressive structures [of her society] her struggle become

God's struggles. It is then Christ who suffers in her and works in her to give birth to new and better human relationships" (pp. 131-2).

This approach tends to divert Nasimiyu-Wasike's attention from the critical spiritual dimension of the problems that she is dealing with (i.e. repentance and reconciliation--which she indeed recognises, e.g. p. 128), and to over-emphasise its social aspects in the effort to get all people "to mutually participate in the creation of a better world for all" (p. 134).

The final entry in this volume of essays is "Christological Paradigms in African Christianity" by J.N.K. Mugambi. The author surveys the theological relevance of "various paradigms evident in the New Testament" (p. 136) according to the following topical categories: occupational, cultural, family, genealogical, theocentric, eschatological, ideological, liturgical, ritualistic, ontological, charismatic, mystical, aristocratic, anthropocentric, juridical, homiletic, epistemological, therapeutic, counselling, normative, ecclesiological, pneumatological, dialectical, festive, and historic. As the preceding listing would indicate, Mugambi's perspective is quite wide-ranging and diverse, and offers a generally useful overview of the various ways in which Christology may be contextualized within a given African society. But every now and again he comes out with some debatable assertions. For example, while it may be true to say that "the controversy at the Council of Nece... was more than doctrinal" (i.e., certain "philosophical, ontological and cultural presuppositions" were also involved), the following conclusion does not necessarily follow:

"Contemporary African Christology needs to be as ecumenical as possible in order to promote as great a theological consensus as can be attained" (p. 142).

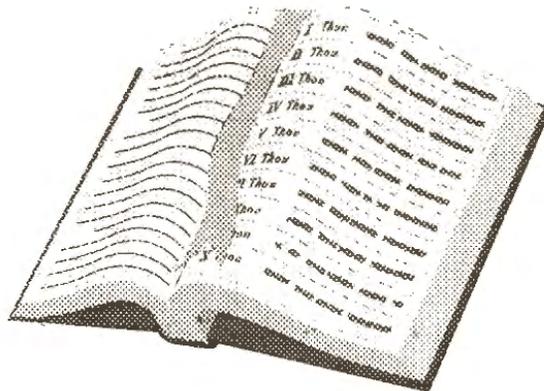
Indeed, what might have been the result for *biblical* Christianity if the preceding guideline had been applied to Arianism? In his inevitable nod to liberation theology, Mugambi claims that the (overly) familiar text of Luke 4:18-9 (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2) is to be interpreted literally and not metaphorically (p. 146). However, such an assertion would seem to be contradicted by what Christ goes on to declare by implication shortly thereafter in Luke 4:24-27, namely, that his mission to humanity could not be thus limited by human prejudices and preferences. Mugambi proposes that Christian theology be recast "within the philosophical framework of African ontology and cosmology" (p. 149). One becomes a bit apprehensive, however, concerning the outcome of such an exercise if the following statement is any indication of what is likely to emerge:

"Traditional African cosmology is monistic, and these doctrines [i.e., about heaven and hell] have a different meaning in a world where 'heaven' and 'hell' are here and now" (loc. cit).

On a cultural-linguistic note, one wonders whether it is reliable to generalise and conclude that "the titles of Jesus as *King and Lord* are alien to traditional African theologising" (p. 152). While "monarchy" as it was known in biblical times may not be the same in many respects as the "chiefdoms" of Africa (Many would object to the possible pejorative tone of that term itself), the concept certainly was, and is, widespread enough to permit a considerable measure of conceptual overlap (cf. Bediako, pp. 21-2).

Such criticisms aside, Mugambi should be commended for adopting such a broad, inclusive, and integrated approach towards the development of a more indigenized expression of Christology in Africa. He offers many keen insights and possibilities in this regard. There is no doubt that such study can serve to edify the Church (p. 161), but only if equally diligent attention is paid to the sole foundation upon which all theologising must be built and according to which it must invariably be judged--namely, the Holy Scriptures. Many of Mugambi's collaborators in this volume of Christological essays that he edited forgot this fundamental fact. Kwame Bediako and to a great extent also P.N. Wachege did not, and they would therefore serve as much more reliable "models" in this vital exercise of contextualizing the Christian faith and life for contemporary Africa.

Read for your life.....



The Keswick Bookshop carries a full line of Christian Books for all your Bible study needs:

- Commentaries and Bible Studies
- Bible Handbooks, Encyclopedias and Dictionaries
- Concordances and study Bibles
- Theology and Church History
- Special Orders

The Keswick Bookshop PO Box 10242 Tel. 226047
 Bruce House, Kaunda Street Nairobi, Kenya, E.Africa

Book Reviews

113 **Ernest Wendland** *Recent Contributions in African Christology: A Book Review Article*

Kwame Bediako *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*

P. N. Wachege *Jesus our Muthamaki (Ideal Elder): An African Christological Study based on the Agikuyu Understanding of Elder*

J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds) *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*