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NEEDED: TASK THEOLOGIANS

An AJET Editorial

AJET is deeply concerned about the development of theologians in Africa. But what kind of theologians are most needed?

The classic definition of theology given by B.B. Warfield states: "Theology is the science of God and his relationship to man and the world." Systematic Theology is devoted to "a unified formulation of truth" derived from divine revelation which is then applied to human life.

This kind of theology, represented by systematic theologies from the west, and sometimes called "Dogmatic Theology," is usually very abstract and seemingly unrelated to life. Pick up most systematic theologies, and you find highly refined, abstract logic designed to provide "a scientific" and "unified formulation" of biblical truth. Theology is neatly arranged in logical categories, but without any application to life. Theological debates rage over dichotomy or trichotomy, the number and organization of the angels, supralapsarianism or infralapsarianism. How does all this impact the common man anywhere in the world?

While there will always be a need for systematic theologians, we need to develop another kind of theologian. Instead of mere professional scholars surrounded by books and isolated from the common Christian in the local church and village, we need *task theologians*. The need for task theologians around the world, and especially in Africa, is very great.

A *task theologian* is out in the battle field, working in the trenches and engaged in spiritual warfare as he is building the church of Jesus Christ. He is fully engaged in evangelism and discipling, bringing believers to maturity in Christ. He teaches them the biblical truth as it applies to them in their context. A *task theologian* is one who knows biblical teaching and can relate it and apply it to the believers whom he is grounding in the faith.

The apostle Paul is a model of the *task theologian* which is needed. Paul was immersed with biblical understanding of the Old Testament which he learned at the feet of Gamaliel. Furthermore, he knew Jesus Christ in a living and dynamic way and was taught by the Holy Spirit. In his missionary endeavours to plant churches where Christ had not been preached, he grounded the converts in biblical truth. Read any of his letters to these churches. They are

filled with theology. But that theology is practically related to the particular needs and problems which they faced.

The Christological passages of Paul, for example, are embedded in practical concerns. Paul's teaching of the incarnation of Christ in Philippians 2:4-11 provides a model of humility for the Philippians, who were deeply divided. The supremacy of Christ as found in Colossians 3:15-20 was written to correct the incipient Gnosticism present in Colosse. Everywhere you turn you find profound theology designed to affect the practical lives of Christians. In fact, theology forms the basis for all practical exhortations for Christian conduct.

Biblical, practical and relevant systematic theologies are greatly needed. *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* by Wilbur O'Donovan (The Paternoster Press, 1996) is an excellent example of a systematic theology which is practical and relevant for use by the common *task theologian* in Africa. Such a systematic theology is the fruit of a life time of study, teaching and interaction with the African churches in order to help them grow into maturity in Christ.

But what is sorely needed are *task theologians* who are in the battle front, evangelising, teaching, planting churches and bringing those churches into maturity, theologians who are also able to study the Scriptures and teach biblical truth in a relevant way. Thank God, there are many *task theologians* in Africa but we need to be equipping and preparing many more if the church in Africa is to become well grounded in the truth.

What are the requirements of a *task theologian*? They are two in number. First, he must know God, love His Word and be able to think and study the Scriptures for himself. In order for him to read the Bible for all its worth, he should be trained in the art of biblical interpretation. Ideally, this means that he must be trained to study the text in the original languages of Scripture and use the tools of exegesis. His Bible should be well worn, and he should have access to basic reference books for exegesis and theological study.

Second, he must know his people - their world view, their temptations and weaknesses, their problems and needs. He must love his sheep to such an extent that he is willing to sacrifice in order to help them grow into spiritual maturity in Christ.

In order to train *task theologians* for our churches, we need *task theologians par excellence* in our theological colleges - men and women who are experts in their knowledge of the Word and with hands-on knowledge of the needs in the churches. This is the greatest need in the evangelical churches in Africa today.

CHRISTIAN RELEVANCE IN MODERN AFRICA

Samuel Waje Kunhiyop

Relevance is a contemporary concern for Christianity worldwide. The gospel by its nature is always relevant, for it has been revealed by the eternal true God to humanity made in the image of God. But the gospel must be made to address men and women in the particulars of their culture. It must become incarnate within each culture even as Christ, the eternal Son of God, was incarnate as a Galilean Jew of Nazareth. The gospel must speak to specific men and women in their particular cultural contexts. Dr. Kunhiyop sets forth helpful guidelines in making biblical Christianity relevant for Africa even while it remains the unchanging gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The principal challenge facing African Christianity is making Christianity relevant enough so that it addresses African existential problems and biblical enough so that it is consistent with God's revelation.

In this regard, Jean-Marc Ela's insightful remark in his book, *My Faith as an African*, is appropriate.

If theology wants to avoid the meaninglessness of purely verbal orthodoxy, which produces generalizations that interest no one, it must

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take into account what is actually lived in particular experience of African local communities.¹

Christianity must face up to the challenge posed by converts who know they are Christians but feel pulled by these traditional beliefs. The need to make Christianity authentic and relevant to the Church in modern Africa is extremely important and urgent. G.C. Oosthuizen in *Post-Christianity in Africa: A Theological and Anthropological Study*, observes: "For various reasons, a theology in Africa, which takes the African situation seriously is desperately important."² Kenneth Cragg states that

New Christians become responsible to Christ for their old setting and to their old setting in the new Truth. But they are not thereby 'going foreign'. . . it is personal discovery of the meaning of the universal Christ within the old framework of race, language, and tradition.³

What is being urged and will be attempted in this article is a relevant Christianity in modern Africa. A more technical word for a relevant theology is contextualization. By contextualization, we mean, "making concepts or ideas relevant to a given situation."⁴ John Frame elaborates this definition by observing that contextualization "applies Scripture to the experience of a particular culture to make its message better understood."⁵ Making the gospel relevant to a particular historical context - in this study, modern Africa - is the task of this article.⁶ Seeking to make Christianity relevant to the church

¹ Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African*. Trans. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999):166-167.

² G. C. Oosthuizen, *Post-Christianity in Africa. A Theological and Anthropological Study*. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1968): 221.

³ Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (Mary Knoll, Orbis Books, 1988), 306.

⁴ Byang Kato, "The Gospel, Cultural Context and Religious Syncretism" in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas, (Minneapolis: World Wide, 1975), 1217.

⁵ John Frame, *A Theology of Lordship. The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1987), 308. Justin S. Ukpon observes that "contextualization means making the Christian message penetrate the fabric of society. Authentic contextualization is encounter between the Christian message and the local context. It is a cultural response to the challenge of the Good News." "Contextualization. A Historical Survey" AFER, 29, (1987), 27.

⁶ Grant Osborn makes the same point by observing that the key issue in contextualization is "relevance." In addition, he states that religious principles must be adapted to meet new cultural challenges." *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. A

necessarily involves communicating the message of the person, works, word and the will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as put forth in the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential context.⁷

GUIDELINES FOR A RELEVANT CHRISTIANITY

While conservative Churches have remained orthodox in their biblical teaching, they often have not succeeded in making Christianity meaningful and relevant to the history and experience of their members. Pioneer missionaries demanded from their converts a life-style, rightly or wrongly, consistent with their Western life-style. The expectation of the missionaries on their converts put a serious strain on many Africans. The crisis and dilemma created by missionaries in part led to the rise of many independent churches such as the Cherubim and Seraphim and the United Native African Church and many others.

Specifically, these indigenous churches were founded to make Christianity relevant to Africans who felt that the official churches were not sympathetic to their deep seated beliefs and practices. Unfortunately, they have neglected the authoritative role of the Scriptures, even though they give lip service to it. Evangelical and conservative churches continue to insist on some beliefs and practices while new church movements are focusing on many areas that seem to be more relevant. The tension between the two positions demonstrates the crucial nature of the Church of Christ in Africa. The fact that both ways fall short of a proper notion of a relevant Christianity suggests very strongly that we must seek ways whereby the Bible, as the inspired Word of God, is meaningfully presented to Christians in their particular setting. What should be done to make Christianity relevant to the Church? Here are some recommendations.

Understanding Culture and Religion

In order to make Christianity relevant, there must be a rigorous attempt to understand the culture and religion of the people without seeking to be

Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 319.

⁷ David J. Hesselgrave, and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization. Meanings, Methods and Models*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 200.

judgmental. Here the role of the anthropologist and sociologist becomes very important to the theologian. For example, anthropologists have shown the need to study different levels of culture such as (1) materialistic aspect, (2) underlying meanings and values, and (3) the worldview, namely, the particular way of understanding and acting towards the world. Thus,

the analysis of a culture must be carefully and thoroughly done. A superficial treatment will often be very misleading, for the apparent situation may in fact belie the actual questions being asked.⁸

Of great importance is the core of the culture which determines the shape of the other layers and of the culture itself. This core is religion. It dynamically shapes the whole culture. It is the heart, the essence of culture. It is like the cell nucleus in any living thing. It contains values and assumptions which a culture develops. Religion interprets puzzling phenomena and provides an understanding of the ultimate mysteries.⁹ Clifford Geertz, the renowned social scientist, defines religion as

. . . a cultural system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.¹⁰

For Geertz then, religion gives meaning to cultural data. It imparts conviction and motivation, and is, at the root of culture. A religious understanding of culture is at the heart of culture.¹¹ In the exegesis of culture and religion of people, the church must strive to enter into the daily experience, willing to learn.

In order to accomplish this, Christians need and must bring a wide and

⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 74.

⁹ Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding. A Handbook for Christian Communication Across Cultural Landscapes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992): 257.

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed., M. (Banton, London: 1966), 4.

¹¹ Alyward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 40.

warm understanding.¹²

This means studying those aspects of culture and religion in all the moods, overtones and undertones of their existence. In addition it means being near enough to hear.¹³ Unspoken ideas and concepts are found in proverbs, crises such as death, and happy occasions such as marriage and the naming ceremony. Names reveal much about their philosophy and theology. They reveal much about those deep seated beliefs and worldview which Christianity must deal with in order to make itself relevant. Of course, this is not easy because, "probing beneath the surface like peeling an onion is a tearful process. To understand the deeper levels of another people's way of life requires sharing in that life. That sharing means putting aside some familiar things and leaving the 'comfort zones' of our own way of life."¹⁴ The world of the invisible spirits which affects the physical world is very real. There must be a serious exegesis of the culture and religion. Failure to do this will only drive the old way underground.

Interpreting the Scripture

Understanding the culture and religion of the people is just the beginning of a relevant Christianity. The task of understanding, interpreting and applying the Scripture is mandatory for an authentic and relevant Christianity. It is not enough to receive without question the theologies developed in other contexts, and expect them to be the norm in an African Church. Ela's important observation reinforces the urgency for an African reading and exposition of the Word of God.

The reading of the gospel is not yet finished nor is it our sole task to repeat what others have discovered, thought, and organized, like those parrots captured in our virgin forests. We must learn to dispense with the mediation of foreign forms or we will end up living our relationship to the gospel with a borrowed personality.¹⁵

The implication of Ela's proposal is that no "theology" can claim finality. It is only the Word of God which is final. In addition, it is important to make a distinction between a "theology" and Scripture. Whereas theology is like a reflection and interpretation of the revealed Word of God, the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Without denying the usefulness in other "theologies" it is

¹² Cragg, 179.

¹³ Cragg, 247.

¹⁴ Smith, 252.

¹⁵ Ela, 142.

only Scripture that is inspired and binding upon other Christians. Furthermore, the biblical and evangelical principles of the priesthood of all believers and the perspicuity [clarity] of Scriptures should motivate Christians to search the Scriptures for themselves and apply the truth in their particular situation.

The task of making the gospel relevant is to exegete and "extract the core meaning of the gospel through listening to God in the context of our communities."¹⁶ By core, we mean the biblical truths which provide the core of the gospel message and its ethical ramifications. These biblical truths (core) are absolute and must remain inviolate in biblical truths in any cross-cultural communications.¹⁷ The core or these universal truths must be distinguished from the form in which they came. The Scriptures were written in different cultural contexts. When an evangelical is calling for a relevant Christianity that is authentic, he means that the cultural aspect or form that came along with either the Scriptures or the pioneer missionaries must be decontextualized so that the biblical truth of the gospel may be discovered and applied afresh to the African existential situation. The need to understand the culture and exegete the Scripture must be held in perspective. The two guidelines are not isolated but complementary. The need to understand both culture and religion and the Word of God is critical for an authentic contextualization. In this regard John Stott notes.

We refuse to become either so absorbed in the Word that we escape into it and fail to let it confront the world or so absorbed in the world that we conform to it and fail to subject it to the judgment of the Word... We listen to the Word with humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to understand. We listen to the world with critical alertness, anxious to understand it too and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to sympathize with it and to seek grace to discover how the gospel relates to it.¹⁸

Listening to both culture and Scripture is therefore integral to a meaningful presentation of Christianity in any historical context. A number of themes present themselves as useful for exploration as one seeks to make a relevant Christianity in modern Africa.

¹⁶ Cragg, 306.

¹⁷ Osborn, 321.

¹⁸ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian. Applying God's Word to Today's World*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 1992), 27-8.

A relevant Christianity in modern Africa must respond biblically and theologically to those fundamental questions that the people are asking. In other words, a relevant Christianity must scratch where the modern African Christian is itching. These questions and itchy spots include a theodicy, ontology of spirits, a concept of marriage, death, salvation, political involvement, women issues (such as ordination of women, training of women in theological institutions), baptism of polygamists, the membership of second wives, homosexuality, *in vitro* fertilization, and various traditional and religious forms of communication. These areas do not exhaust the list but provide fruitful themes to explore. Let me briefly expand on some of these areas.

Theologians and church leaders must understand and respond to African theodicy which sees pain, evil and suffering to be caused by evil spirits and witches.

In order to make Christianity relevant to the church, there needs to be a biblical and systematic presentation of theodicy. A number of passages such as Genesis 3; Job 1-4, and 1 Peter 3-4 are instructive. Genesis 3 gives the origin and cause of evil and pain in the world. In Job, there is an interaction between God, Job, Satan and pain (evil). Evidently, though satanic powers were involved, there is the sovereignty, love and the permission of God. Another clear insight is that it was not because of Job's sin that all the evil befell him. A proper interpretation therefore must take into account the sovereignty of God, the role that Satan and demonic powers play in this dramatic story. Certainly, contrary to most African beliefs, an omnipotent, loving and caring God could and does allow pain and suffering to fall upon his own children.

A theology that seeks to be relevant and meaningful to the African Christian will seek to apply the Scriptures to the world of the invisible which is very real. Bayo Abijola states. "The African world of this century is still dominated by supernatural thoughts of witches, ghosts, spirits, demons and powers which are strongly believed to be against the welfare of man."¹⁹ Darryll Forde also notes.

Gods, spirits, and magical forces beyond the community, together with witches and sorcerers within it are postulated in the explanation of the workings of the universe, of the incidence of benefits and misfortunes, and

¹⁹ Bayo Abijola, "St. Paul's Concept of Principalities and Powers in African Context" in *African Theological Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (1988), 127.

of the strains of life in society.²⁰

I find it very intriguing that even though we teach in Bible Schools, theological colleges and seminaries that a Christian or one who has experienced the new birth and is indwelt by the Spirit cannot be possessed by Satan or demons, there are pastors and church leaders who would testify that some Christians need to be "delivered".

We must acknowledge the existence of principalities and powers (Col.2:20, Eph. 6:12) but also boldly declare God's triumph over them through Christ. However, the battle with these supernatural forces is still on with Christians (Eph. 6:12). The theologian must therefore explore these passages and the whole of Scripture and make them relevant to the African Christian. The cross has defeated all elemental spirits and powers that may not wish the Christian good.²¹

Concerning the belief and power of witchcraft, a careful reading of Scripture indicates that God's people are forbidden to deal in witchcraft, and sorcery (Deut. 18:10-12; Lev. 20:27; 1 Samuel 28). The very condemnation of God about these practices indicates that they are real, otherwise the injunction is vacuous. In Scripture, especially the New Testament there is much evidence to the reality of spirits and their relationship to human beings. For example, I find very disturbing that some Christians would say that a man or woman can marry a demon and have children. Though this is possible within the African worldview, the biblical revelation does not warrant it since it states that Satan and demons neither marry, procreate, die, or even increase. The church needs to explore these biblical passages and articulate a theology that is truly biblical, based on a historical-grammatical and evangelical method of interpretation.

A relevant Christianity will seek to address the concept of marriage. Most expatriate missionaries see and interpret polygamy only in sexual terms. A man is believed to be a polygamist only to satisfy his sexual desires. Even Walter Trobisch, a missionary and a renowned author on African marriages demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of African marriage and sexuality. He writes,

In a culture [African] in which love is identified with sexuality, in which the individual's personal erotic love is a dimension of the human heart, in which he lacks experience in all its aspects and in which, consequently,

²⁰ Darryll Forde, *African Worlds. Studies in the Cosmological and Social Values of African Peoples*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), x.

²¹ Bayo, 127.

the idea of "faithfulness" does not exist, a word like "adultery" must remain an empty, abstract, juristic concept.²²

Trobisch's remark betrays a serious lack of understanding regarding African marriage and sexuality. Most societies knew what was unfaithfulness and punished with great severity those who commit adultery before the coming of Christian missionaries. In my traditional society (the Bajju of Central Nigeria), an adulterer was forced to drink the excreta of a he-goat. He was also paraded about naked in the neighborhood. Of course it is not only the Bajju, but there are many other African societies who know and regard adultery as a very serious offense. Another observation is that Trobisch's remarks demonstrate how easy it is for the outsider to read a meaning into a culture. A proper understanding of marriage and sexuality that is relevant to African Christians must realize that there are many reasons for marriage, including economic, social and religious. The need for children, especially male children, has been the most compelling reason for polygamy. A man who dies childless falls into oblivion. He is unable to find happiness in the next world because of having no children to honour him. He is cut off from the family community. Childlessness is a personal disgrace.²³ A contextualized theology must show that whatever the marital circumstances, the African man or woman can still experience meaning and wholeness in his new faith.

Another important area for Christianity to make itself relevant is the concept of salvation. To the African, salvation is not only spiritual but has physical and social dimensions. This view of salvation seems to be close to a biblical notion of salvation which depicts human beings not only as spiritual but as physical entities. Many illnesses and even death are believed by Africans to be unnatural, requiring special spiritual power to rescue him from these powers. There is therefore need to proclaim Christ as the all sufficient Saviour.

All Churches must hold fast to the message of the cosmic victory of Christ on the cross over demonic powers. They must preach total and complete salvation and the adequacy of Christ over human problems. Christ must be proclaimed not only as Savior of the soul, but as Lord of lords, King of kings, Victor, Conqueror, Healer and all in all Savior who is sufficient for

²² Walter Trobisch, "Church Discipline" in *Practical Anthropology* (Sept-October, 1961), 202.

²³ Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, Orbis Books, translated from the German by John O'Donovan (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, New York, 1992), 115-16.

all human needs.²⁴

The need for caution and careful exegetical theology in terms of discarding, transforming and retaining cultural practices is a very important step in the contextualization of the message of Jesus Christ. The role of theologians and pastors becomes crucial because they are equipped with the Word of God and they also know "where the people itch." A proper contextualization is best done by well trained indigenes. This is probably the greatest area of need for the evangelical church in Africa. The need for such theologians is important and urgent.

Oosthuizen declares. "What Africa needs today is men thoroughly versed in the Bible, in contemporary theology, in world trends and social conditions, and in the African world and its thinking."²⁵

The theologian and pastors do not operate in isolation. They must demonstrate their expertise in conjunction with the believing community - the Church.

Involving the Church

The Church plays a significant role in contextualization of theology. Thus, as Oosthuizen notes,

Theologically, the church is called upon to digest the relation between God and the concrete world; this should be done dynamically and positively. Theology is the intellectual work to be undertaken by devoted Christian thinkers in the church, and having as its aim to explain the church's basis and spiritual experiences in such a way that it satisfies the desire for clearness and cohesion of the believers.²⁶

The church has to reevaluate its practices, attitudes, and teaching on questions that were left unanswered during the first phase of evangelization. The missionary apostolate "cultivated in Africans only that surface which invited cultivation, leaving fallow a no-man's land bristling with clumps of questions, doubts, hopes, and dissatisfactions of every sort."²⁷

One must warn that the church must maintain a proper perspective on its

²⁴ Ajibole, 127.

²⁵ Oosthuizen, 235.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

²⁷ Ela, 140.

task of contextualization. The church should retain the qualities of foreignness and indigeneity. In other words, while the church is in some sense indigenous, there is something about it that demands foreignness. Max Warren declares,

There is a proper sense in which we can speak of the church becoming indigenous and that is when we can think of it as taking root in some particular country and there establishing a colony of heaven. But that colony, if it is true to the quality of heaven, will be quite unlike anything else in that country. There can be no escape from this foreignness.²⁸

What is being emphasized here is that the Church ought to retain the idea of indigeneity and also foreignness. These two must be maintained. The foreignness, indigeneity, rootedness in Christ, living and spreading in the climate are therefore important elements in contextualization. Finally, "a truly indigenous Church is a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures."²⁹

Checks On a Relevant Christianity

There are always dangers in contextualization. One of the obvious ones is the danger of syncretism which is very evident in some African independent churches. The evangelical church must have some ways of checking against such a danger and many others.

The first check is the role of Scripture. For the evangelical theologian, Scripture is the measure for Christian life and conduct. Though issues change and need to be addressed, the Word of God remains the same and has to be the source for the development and evaluation of any contextualized Christianity. A relevant Christianity is not the last word, but the Word of God is. Christians need to affirm the controlling and guiding role of Scripture in their relationship to culture. Byang H. Kato writes in this regard,

²⁸ Max Warren, *The Truth of Conversion. A Study in the Nature of Christian Hope* (London: The Canterbury Press, 1948), 138. In the words of Oosthuizen, "The Church must be rooted in Christ before they can be related to the soul, and they will in this sense be foreign to the world, but they must live and spread in the new climate" p.220.

²⁹ Oosthuizen, 224 .

Africans who become Christians should, therefore, remain Africans wherever their culture does not conflict with the Bible. It is the Bible that must judge culture. Where a conflict results, the cultural element must give way.³⁰

It is a fair statement to note that most independent church movements have four sources of authority, namely, the Bible, the missionary churches, the traditional belief system, and the teachings of the prophet.³¹ This results in very serious syncretistic Christianity as these movements have shown.³² The only way to avoid such heretical teachings is to recognize the singular authority of the Scripture over traditional beliefs and practices.

The second check is the nature of culture. In as much as culture has positive features, it should never be forgotten that it cannot have the last word on what is normative for the Christian. Bruce J. Nicholls rightly notes that "culture is never neutral, it is always a strange complex of truth and error, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, seeking God and rebelling against him."³³ The search for a relevant Christianity must come to grips with this fact. If Scripture is allowed its authority, certain cultural practices will have to be stopped. Hence, "in Africa, contextualization of the believing community must include the de-culturalization not only of these Western accretions but also of indigenous concepts that are contrary to the word of God."³⁴ This is very critical in light of the contemporary situation which sees everything cultural or indigenous as good. The early church demonstrates that certain elements of culture had to be condemned, such as idolatry, food and meat contaminated by idols, and fornication (Acts 15).

The third check is the need for dependence on Holy Spirit. An evangelical concept of a contextualized Christianity recognizes the active role of

³⁰ Kato, 42.

³¹ Sheila Suzanne Walker, *Christianity African Style. The Harrist Church of the Ivory Coast*. Ph.D Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1976, 244.

³² As an example of serious syncretistic contextualization, the Harrist Church teaches that Harris did the same thing for the Africans that Jesus Christ did for the Europeans—he brought us Christianity. God sent each of his sons to a different group of people to save them. Jesus went to Europe to save the whites, but he did not come to Africa. It was the Prophet Harris, an African like us, whom God sent to bring us into the light. Walker, 247.

³³ Bruce Nicholls, "Gospel and Culture" In: *Down to Earth. Studies in Christianity and Culture*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 68.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

the Holy Spirit in leading believers to discover truth and application as they read Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is responsible for giving the new birth (Titus 3:15, John 3:5), moreover, He is to be depended upon to change the core of the person to the image of Christ.

The fourth check is the role of Church history and the universal Christian community. An evangelical concept of a contextualized theology recognizes the fact that God has been at work in the history of His people. It is, therefore, the obligation of the Church to hear the teachers that God has used over the hundreds of years of its existence. They must be heard critically, in order to profit from their mistakes, as well as from their achievements.³⁵ In seeking to make the Gospel relevant, the church does well to study her history and thus avoid the errors and heresies that have been committed. The Cherubim and Seraphim Movement would have avoided "syncretistic contextualization," such as Arianism, if it had cared to examine how the Church of Jesus Christ had dealt with this issue of great theological significance. What is being said here is that church in her history acts as a check in contextualization. It is not just the tradition of the church in past centuries, but the present church in various cultural situations which also checks contextualization. Paul Hiebert best sums up this aspect.

We need each other to see our sins, for we more readily see the sins of others than our own. Similarly, we see the ways others misinterpret Scriptures before we see our own misinterpretations. Along the same line, we need Christians from other cultures, for they often see how our cultural biases have distorted our interpretations of the Scripture. This corporate nature as a community of interpretation extends not only to the church in every culture, but also to the church in all ages.³⁶

There is need to be cautious in trying so hard to indigenize the church to the point whereby it is only a reaction against western imperialism and she refuses to listen also to what God is doing in the western churches.

CONCLUSION

What will a relevant Christianity in modern Africa look like? A contextualized Christianity worked out according to the principle of the preceding discussion means that the actual expression of theological truth will differ from

³⁵ Frame, 304.

³⁶ Hiebert, 398.

culture to culture. However, the content, namely, the basic theological truths, will not change.³⁷

In order that the Church be relevant it must seek to understand the culture, exegete the Scriptures, and involve the Christian community. The Bible should be the judge of culture. The Bible should also be used to take captive all traditional means of communication. African traditional forms of communication, such as drama, story-telling, and rituals that were effective in communicating traditional and religious beliefs and values need to be transformed for effective communication of biblical truths in forms that are relevant and authentic to the African. Though contextualization faces the danger of distorting the faith in order make it more palatable in a given historical context, that need not be the case, if the guidelines discussed in this chapter are followed. If our Christianity is to be meaningful, it must be relevant, scratching where new converts and the whole church are itching. Many theologians, preachers and teachers are scratching. The evangelical theologian is committed to the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility and authority of Scripture as well as being well informed with the problems and needs of contemporary church. A relevant Christianity in Africa scratches where the modern African, the contemporary believer is itching.

THE GREAT DRAGON

The Nature and Limits of Satan's Power

Keith Ferdinando

One reality of the African experience which has not been adequately touched by the gospel is the reality of Satan and his kingdom of darkness. Two extreme approaches challenge the African churches today: one that ignores the demonic powers and thereby leaves the Christians defenseless against the attacks of Satan; the other which has integrated the African traditional preoccupation with the powers of Satan and inadvertently magnifies the presence and power of the evil spirits in the Christian church. What is desperately needed is a balanced biblical approach to Satan that arises from a study of the biblical text. In this first article of a two-part series on Satan, Dr. Ferdinando exposites the biblical teaching on the nature and limits of Satan's power.

Throughout the Bible there are references to the existence of an unseen realm of created supernatural beings whose activities impinge on the visible world of men and women. It is divided between those which are obedient to God and those perceived to be hostile to him, to humankind in general, and to the church in particular.

THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

The New Testament writings are united in their approach to supernatural evil, despite variations of emphasis among them. Specifically, they almost all maintain the existence of one evil being of particular importance, commonly called the devil or Satan but identified also under a wide variety of other names. By the name of Satan he first appears in three Old Testament passages (1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1), although the serpent of Genesis 3 is unmasked

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as Satan in the New Testament (2 Cor 11:3,13-15; Rev. 12:9; 20:2) and there are other possible intimations of the existence of a pre-eminent supernatural being of evil. In the literature of post-biblical Judaism various names are given to the leader of the rebellious angels, including *Mastema*, *Satanael*, *Samael*, *Belial* and *Devil*.

Little apparent interest is shown in his *metaphysical nature*, but he is certainly conceived in personal terms rather than as a force or principle. Hence personal attributes are ascribed to him, such as intelligence (2 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 6:11), will and intention (Lk. 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:9ff.; 20:3,8), and deliberate, conscious action (Jn. 8:44). Moreover the suggestion that he rules other spirit beings, the reports of his encounter with Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1ff., par.), and the way in which his name is juxtaposed with that of Christ (2 Cor. 6:15), or of God (Jas. 4:7), all point in this direction.

Theologically this is a point of considerable importance. If Satan were to be understood as merely a personification of forces of evil, one would be obliged to conclude either that those forces derived from God, that is from his nature or his works, or that they were co-eternal with him. In consequence either his goodness or his sovereignty would necessarily be called into question, as also the ultimate triumph of good over evil. However the notion that Satan is a being created perfect by God but who corrupted himself by an act of his own self-determination, maintains both God's sovereign rule and his holiness.

Satan emerges in the Bible as the supreme enemy of God and of his works of creation and redemption. The Hebrew term, *satan*, itself means adversary. Some of the titles given him, such as 'ο το κράτος εχων του θανατου (*him who holds the power of death*: Heb. 2:14f.) and ανθρωποκτονος (*murderer*: Jn. 8:44), suggest that the destruction of humanity is among his most important defining characteristics. In Revelation 9:11 the ruler of the demonic scorpions which torment sinful humanity, called *Abaddon* or *Apollyon* which both mean 'Destroyer', is also most likely Satan himself. Following the work of Christ his hostility is focused particularly on the church whose members have been saved from sin and death, and from his own tyranny. Accordingly he is portrayed as the lion, 'looking for someone to devour' (1 Pet. 5:8) and the dragon who attacks the woman and 'her offspring' (Rev. 12:13-17), while Paul exhorts the Ephesians to take up spiritual weapons against him (Eph. 6:10-20). Such representations are thoroughly consistent with the three Old Testament references to Satan noted above, in all of which he is seen pursuing the destruction of those identified as servants of God: David, Job and the high priest Joshua.

In the fourth gospel Satan is the only disobedient supernatural being to play any significant role; the only references to demons are those in which Jesus' opponents seek to denounce him as one demon-possessed (Jn. 7:20; 8:48,52; 10:20f.). However, elsewhere numerous passages suggest that Satan is supreme among a host of evil spiritual beings - demons, angels and 'principalities and powers' - which also appear to be personal in nature.¹ In the synoptic gospels demons speak to Jesus and, like Satan himself, demonstrate will and intelligence (as in Mk. 1:24; 5:12). Moreover the synoptists emphasise the unitary nature of the demonic realm under Satan's control much more than was generally presupposed within Judaism.

There is evidence of a definite shift of emphasis from the operation of individual demons to the view that they formed part of the kingdom of Satan. ... Jesus regarded the operation of evil through the demons as part of the activity of Satan. ... [he] does not have an atomistic view of the world of evil, but sees it as a unity under Satan.²

This is not to deny that some postbiblical literature assumed a connection between Satan and demons, but generally demons were seen as isolated, individualistic agents of misfortune. Jesus' words in the Beelzebul controversy (Matt. 12:25-29; Mk. 3:23-7; Lk. 11:17-18), by which he repudiated the accusation that he was driving out demons by the power of the prince of demons, clearly identified them as agents of Satan's power, part of his kingdom and household, and thereby revealed Satan as the ruler of a demonic empire.

Similarly Satan is represented by Paul as the ruler of evil supernatural powers. The title 'ο αρχων της του αερος (*the ruler of the kingdom of the air*; Eph. 2:2) describes him as 'the prince of the demonic powers of the air'.³ The air

¹ Cf. Matt. 25:41; Mk. 3:22ff.; Eph. 6:10-11; Rev. 9:11; 12:7-9; 15:13.

² R. Yates, 'The Powers of Evil in the New Testament', *EvQ* 52 (1980), p. 99. Cf. J.D.G. Dunn & G.H. Twelftree, 'Demon Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament', *Churchman* 94 (1980), pp. 217-8; J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology I: the Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1971), pp. 93-4; W.G. Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 44.

³ G.M.C. MacGregor, 'Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of St. Paul's Thought', *NTS* 1 (1954), p. 18; cf. A.T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1990), p. 96. W. Wink, *Naming the Powers* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 84, suggests that the expression refers to the cultural and spiritual atmosphere that envelops people, alienating them from God, and H. Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (Edinburgh & London:

was understood as the dwelling place of evil spirits,⁴ and may thus be seen as 'another way of indicating the "heavenly realm" which, according to Ephesians 6:12, is the abode of [the] principalities and powers'.⁵ The word, εξουσία, which normally means 'authority', here describes 'the sphere of the ruler's authority rather than .. that authority itself'.⁶ Satan is thus the prince of that domain in which demons operate, and the expression echoes Jesus' exposure of him as 'prince of demons'.

In Colossians and to a lesser degree Ephesians Satan himself is in fact somewhat eclipsed by what are usually collectively referred to as the 'principalities and powers' (cf. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15).⁷ The exact meaning of the vocabulary Paul employs here has been much debated but the beings referred to are best understood throughout his writings, as also in the one non-Pauline usage (1 Pet. 3:22), as those identified elsewhere as Satan's 'fallen' angels (cf. Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev., 12:7-9).⁸ Thus in Colossians 2:15 God disarms them, makes a public spectacle of them, and triumphs over them in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 they are among the enemies Christ must destroy before handing the kingdom

Nelson, 1961), pp. 30f., takes a similar view. Such ideas may be present in the immediately following reference (τοι πνευμάτων τού νυν ενεργούντων εν τοῖς 'υιοῖς τῆς απειθείας), but contemporary notions of the denizens of 'o ατηρ rule them out here.

⁴ Cf. W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 19; C.E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 60-1; C.L. Mitton, *Ephesians* (London: Oliphants, 1976), p. 83; R. Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 91.

⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 282. A.T. Lincoln, 'A Re-Examination of 'The Heavencies' in Ephesians', *NTS* 19 (1972-3), pp. 469f., note 3, thus points out that 'it is not necessary to think that in Ephesians the "air" is one definite and distinct sphere while the heavencies are another'. Cf. also Lincoln, 1990, pp. 95-6.

⁶ Lincoln, 1990, p. 95.

⁷ The principal terms Paul uses are αρχαί, εξουσίαι, δυνάμεις, κυριότητες, θρονοί. In addition ονομάτα (Eph. 1:21) and κοσμοκρατορες τοι σκοτών τούτων τα πνευματικά τῆς πονηρίας εν τοῖς επουρανίοις (Eph. 6:12) are used once only. The expression επουρανία καὶ επιγεία καὶ καταχθονία (Phil. 2:10) may refer to similar beings.

⁸ Cf. Schnackenburg, 1991, p. 272.

over to the Father. In Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22 Christ is exalted above the powers in heavenly glory; both texts exploit the imagery of Psalm 110:1 embedded in which are ideas of warfare and the subjection of the enemies of the one enthroned, and thus they both imply the powers' defeat and their submission to Christ, their conqueror.

Finally in Ephesians 6:12 the 'principalities and powers' can only be understood as evil spirits or 'fallen' angels, since the believer must struggle and take up spiritual armour against them. Moreover the description of spiritual conflict in Ephesians 6:10-20 again presupposes Satan's rule over the powers as part of his demonic realm. Since they are identified with Satan as the adversaries against whom Christians struggle, they must at least be allied with him (cf. 6:11-12). Furthermore, by listing them in apposition to 'αἱ μεθοδεῖαι τοῦ διαβόλου (the devil's schemes: 6:11) Paul seems to be defining more closely the agents by which Satan operates: 'The following enumeration of the evil powers brings to view the spiritual world subordinate to the devil, inspired and directed by him.'⁹ They are part of his empire, the instruments by which he wages war against the people of God but which will ultimately suffer the same fate as himself. Moreover Christ's death affects them in a way similar to that in which the Johannine writings and Hebrews understand it to affect Satan (Col. 2:15; cf. Jn. 12:31; Heb. 2:14-15). Thus when Paul speaks of 'principalities and powers', in that he is referring to the denizens of Satan's spiritual kingdom, it may be supposed that Satan is implicitly included as their head. Equally when in other writings the emphasis is on Satan, included are all those spiritual beings which are united in rebellion with him.

Satan's exercise of power is expressed not only in his rule over demons, 'fallen' angels and 'principalities and powers' but also in the domination he exercises on earth and specifically over fallen humanity. This is expressed in the New Testament in a number of ways, including certain titles which explicitly affirm it. In John's gospel the Lord Jesus Christ three times refers to Satan as 'ο αρχων του κοσμου τουτου [*the prince of this world*]: Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and Paul describes him as 'ο θεος του αιωνος τουτου (*the god of this age*: 2 Cor. 4:4). In both cases references to the 'world' and the 'age' refer to the present world system in rebellion against God, and the titles indicate that it is Satan who inspires and directs fallen humanity in its wickedness. In his first epistle John again refers to his domination of the present evil world in terms which suggest its passive acquiescence in his dark purposes, 'the whole world is under the control of the evil one [*lit. "lies in the evil one"*, εν τω πονηρω κειται]

⁹ Schnackenburg, 1991, p. 273.

(1 Jn. 1:19). Similarly Paul describes Satan's inspiration of those who are dead in sin (Eph 2:2) and who walk κατά τὸν ἀρχόντα τῆς εξουσίας τοῦ αεροῦ (according to the prince of the power of the air). In the temptation narratives of Matthew and Luke Satan himself claims to dispose of all the kingdoms of the world (Mt. 4:8-9; Lk. 4:5-7).

BIBLICAL DEMONOLOGY

The Bible in general shows little interest in speculative demonology. Old Testament demonology is particularly meagre compared with the demonologies of surrounding cultures, largely because of the supreme importance given to God's absolute sovereign reign over all that he has created. Indeed in its contemporary context the meagreness of Old Testament demonology should be seen, in part at least, as a polemic against the strong emphasis of Mesopotamian religion on the role of demons in human life.¹⁰ New Testament demonology is fuller, but still functions within the same parameters as that of the Old. This explains its continuing reticence which is particularly obvious when compared with the increasingly extravagant demonologies of post-biblical Judaism. Thus the synoptists showed no speculative or theoretical interest in demons but were rather concerned with what they were doing and how Jesus dealt with them. This is suggested by Twelftree's essentially pragmatic definition of the synoptic concept of demons: 'Evil spirits/demons are the agents of Satan whose chief role is to cause illness through totally dominating or possessing individuals.'¹¹ Indeed the variety of expressions used by the synoptists to refer to demons or evil spirits suggests the absence of any clear conceptualisation of their nature, thereby again indicating a lack of theoretical interest in the question.¹²

Similarly Paul makes no effort to distinguish between the various beings designated as 'principalities and powers' or to construct a systematic demonology. The terms he uses are employed in varying combinations and linked together for rhetorical effect. 'The diverse terms, which all imply a spiritual, superhuman influence, are not intended to give any gradation or specification but to indicate in their profusion the abundance and development of

¹⁰ Cf. J.H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 66; L.F. Hartman, 'Demons (in the Bible)', in W.J. McDonald (ed.), *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. IV (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 752; E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), chapter 1.

¹¹ G. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Nottingham University, 1981), pp. 9f.

¹² Dunn & Twelftree, 1980, p. 217.

power.¹³ What is important for the synoptists and for Paul is Satan's rule, and the conflict between his unified kingdom and God's:

In the NT there are two kingdoms, the kingdom of the prince of this world and the kingdom of God. Satan fights with all his might against the kingdom of God. There is thus no place for any special interest in the subordinate helpers in this conflict, whether angels on the one side or demons on the other.¹⁴

Throughout the Bible therefore, where the demonological is introduced it is for practical pastoral and theological reasons rather than out of speculative curiosity; for the visible world is seen as a theatre of maleficent activity by supernatural beings, as also by occult practitioners. Very little is in fact said concerning magic, particularly in the New Testament, although where it does come into view there is the same negative attitude towards it as is found in the Old (cf. for example Acts 8:9-24; 13:4-12; 19:13-20; Gal. 5:20; Rev 21:8; 22:15). The absence of a speculative interest in magic means that little indication is given of the source of its power, but there are suggestions that it is essentially satanic (Acts 13:10; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13). Nevertheless its potential efficacy is assumed.

Consequently it is not easy to develop a coherent anatomy of the supernatural world(s) of the New Testament writers. Sometimes it is difficult to establish whether reference is being made to obedient or disobedient spirit beings (as in 1 Tim. 3:16), or indeed to spirits at all (Rev. 1:20), and the nature of the relationship existing between entities variously designated as demons, powers or Satan's angels is also unclear. Similarly the New Testament gives little attention to the origin of evil supernatural beings.¹⁵ Such allusions as are made are incidental, as in Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 (and perhaps 1 Tim. 3:6;

¹³ Schnackenburg, 1991, p. 77.

¹⁴ W. Foerster, 'δαίμων, δαίμονιον', in G. Kittel (ed.), *TDNT*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 18.

¹⁵ Some writers such as M.F. Unger, *Biblical Demonology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press, 1952), p. 184, & E.M.B. Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1981), pp. 39-42, identify a 'fall' of Satan in Isa. 14:12-20 but the text offers little exegetical support for such a view. Cf. P.J. Nel, 'The Conception of Evil and Satan in Jewish Traditions in the Pre-Christian Period', in P.G.R. de Villiers (ed.), *Like a roaring lion ...: Essays on the Bible, the church and demonic powers* (Pretoria: C.B. Powell Bible Centre, University of South Africa), 1987, p. 15, note 14.

5.21). In John 8:44 the phrase καὶ εν τῇ ἀληθειᾳ οὐκ εστηκεν (*not holding to the truth*) may perhaps be an implicit reference to Satan's 'fall',¹⁶ while Revelation 12:4 possibly alludes to his inspiration of an angelic 'fall': 'His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them down to the earth'.¹⁷ There are references to a primeval fall of Satan in Luke 10:18 and Revelation 12:7-8, but in each case the incident is used as a metaphor for the effect on Satan either of the disciples' exorcisms or of the coming and victory of Christ. The implication is that the New Testament writers did not consider the development of a systematic demonology to be of prime importance. What concerned them was the reality of the power of 'ο του κοσμου αρχων τουτου [*the prince of this world*] (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and its significance for the church, and of course the impact of Christ's work on him.

HUMAN SIN, DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND SATAN

Two fundamental perspectives shape the biblical writers' developing understanding of the nature of Satan's power, particularly with reference to humanity. First, it is closely related to human sin. The power he wields over mankind is not based on any supposed 'legal' right, although this has sometimes been suggested. Luke 4:6, in which Satan claimed that all the authority and splendour of the kingdoms of the world had 'been given' to him, implying that God was the giver and that he had therefore a legitimate right to dispose of them as he wished, is sometimes quoted to support this view. However the Bible does not affirm all that it contains, and the one whose words are here recorded is elsewhere described by Christ as 'a liar and the father of lies' (Jn. 8:44); the temptation narratives themselves illustrate his devious manipulation of the biblical text to achieve his evil purposes. The very fact that he is finally 'driven out' (Jn. 12:31) and that his forces are disarmed and defeated (Col. 2:15) suggests that he is an illegitimate usurper to be judged and dispossessed rather than one possessing valid rights and claims which would have to be legally settled.

It is human sin that constitutes the basis and opportunity for the tyranny Satan exercises over men and women. The Bible indicates that he is related to such sin in several ways. In the first place, it constantly portrays him as a tempter who seeks to seduce to sin. In Matthew 4:3 and 1 Thessalonians 3:5

¹⁶ J.R.W. Stott, *The Epistles of John* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1964), p. 137 says, 'This seems to indicate a fall from the truth in which he once "stood" (RV)'.

¹⁷ W. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1962 [1940]), p. 136.

he is actually called 'ο πειραζών (*the tempter*). His purpose in the persecution of Job was not so much to afflict him physically and materially as to induce him to curse God (Job 1:11; 2:5); in 1 Chronicles 21:1 he tempts David to take a census of the people of Israel; and most important of all, as the serpent in Genesis 3 he lures Eve to eat the forbidden fruit and so precipitates the original human rebellion against the Creator. In the New Testament he makes his first appearance as the tempter of the Lord Jesus Christ himself; he tempts Peter (Lk. 22:31-32), Judas (Lk. 22:3-4; Jn. 13:2) and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3); and the epistles contain numerous warnings against his temptations and the ruses he employs to make them effective (1 Cor 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:27; 6:10-20; 1 Tim. 5:15). Moreover his temptations embrace not only moral seduction but also the inciting of defection from the truth, the corruption of thinking as well as of morals (2 Cor. 11:14-15; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).¹⁸ However it is vital to notice that nowhere in the Bible is Satan's activity as tempter held to lessen human responsibility and consequent guilt. The temptation of David, Judas and Ananias by Satan did not mitigate their culpability and consequent punishment. They are not identified as victims but as responsible agents who freely sinned.

Besides seducing to sin he also accuses those who succumb. In Zechariah 3:1 he stands accusing Joshua, and accusation is at the heart of his attack on Job to whom he attributes motives of self-interest and insincerity for his apparent fear of God (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5). In Revelation 12:10 it is as 'the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night' that Satan is expelled from heaven, and it is at least likely that the question of Romans 8:33, 'Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?' has Satan in mind as the potential accuser.

Finally he is a murderer who holds the power of death (Jn. 8:44; Heb. 2:14). Death is the judicial penalty for sin which is imposed by God himself, as the Bible makes abundantly clear (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 6:23). If Satan inflicts death, as well as lesser physical afflictions,¹⁹ it must be that he somehow exploits the penalty which properly attaches to sin.

He is thus tempter to sin, accuser of sin and exploiter of sin's penalty. And it is by inspiring sin that he enslaves rebellious men and women to his own authority. It is human sin that empowers him and gives him such control over humanity as he possesses, which becomes particularly evident in passages

¹⁸ Cf. C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A. & C. Black, 1973), p. 274.

¹⁹ Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7; Mk. 3:22ff., par.; Lk. 13:10ff; Acts 10:38; Rev. 9:10f..

which consider the effect of Christ's death on him.²⁰ Those who sin are his 'children' who fall blindly under his dominion and behave as he does, walking 'according to the prince of the power of the air' even though they may deny his very existence (1 Jn. 3:10; 5:19; Eph. 2:2). He endeavours to perpetuate their blindness so that they should not recognise the grim reality of their situation nor the truth of the gospel by which they might be delivered from his grip (2 Cor. 4:4). Barrett makes the point clearly and succinctly:

Man upset the balance of God's creation by reaching for that which was above him, for which he had not been made and was not fitted. Out of this imbalance arise both the anthropological and cosmic malaise of the universe: man attempts to live independently of his Creator, treating himself as his own god, and thereby not only ceases to be truly himself but also loses control of what should have been under his dominion and falls under the control of demonic powers [my italics].²¹

His eventual purpose however, as we have noted above, is not simply to enslave captives but to exterminate them, thus destroying the creative work of God himself, and so he accuses of sin and seeks to insist on the imposition of its penalty. He is a murderer and destroyer, and it is by the inspiration and exploitation of sin that he murders and destroys. Satan and all his forces are parasitic on sin; they have no legitimate power over men and women but exploit their rebellion to bring about this final purpose of destruction. It was because of Jesus' own sinlessness that he was free of Satan's control, and that Satan made such efforts to corrupt him. In John 14:30f. Jesus refers to the coming of 'the prince of this world' against him, to take his life. However he continues, 'He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.' Whereas other men fall under Satan's murderous tyranny because of their sin, Christ was free from Satan's power precisely because of his sinlessness. Consequently his death was not the necessary penalty of his sins, upon which Satan might try to insist, but an act of loving, filial obedience to the Father.

Second, Satan's power is always exercised subject to divine sovereignty, thus repudiating all notions of a metaphysical dualism in which Satan and God would be equal powers. This is most clearly indicated by the numerous New Testament references to the defeat, judgement and dispossession of Satan and the powers as a result of the redemptive work of

²⁰ This will be considered in a second article.

²¹ C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: A. & C. Black, 1962), pp. 92-3.

Christ (Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 2:13f.; 3:8; Rev. 12:1ff.; cf. Eph. 1:20f.; 3:10; Phil. 2:10-11; Col. 2:15),²² and by the anticipation of his ultimate judgement (Matt. 25:41; Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:7-10; and cf. 1 Cor. 15:24). Also very significant are the frequent suggestions of the way in which, in his very malignancy, he operates within the constraints of divine permission and limitation.

This is particularly evident in the prologue to Job, where initially Satan can only touch Job's family and possessions by God's consent and is forbidden, and consequently unable, to touch his person. Subsequently, in Job 2, he is allowed to afflict Job's body but not to kill him; as a result although Job suffers appallingly he does not die. Similarly in Luke 22:31 Jesus informs Peter that Satan has 'asked' to sift him. The temptation of the apostle can take place only by divine consent. And while the author of Revelation lays considerable emphasis on the activity of Satan and his forces in the world, frequent references indicate the overruling of God in all that they do (Rev. 9:1,5; 11:6-7; 13:5ff.). The use of the 'divine passive' (*passivum divinum*) in Revelation 13:5-7 suggests that the Satanic beast's power to blaspheme and to attack and defeat the people of God came ultimately from God himself. Moreover it is not only that God controls and limits what Satan does but that he uses it to accomplish his own purposes, including purposes of judgement. In a striking passage Caird draws attention to this repeated feature as it finds expression in Revelation:

Throughout his book John is constantly trying to show how God's hand may be detected in the affairs of the world; but he is equally insistent that Satan can do nothing except by the permission of God, who uses Satan's grimmest machinations to further his own bright designs.²³

Similarly the impact of the dual account of David's numbering of Israel (2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chr. 21:1) is to suggest that the same event may be viewed from the twin perspectives of Satan's malice and of divine purpose. However even the chronicler, who attributed the temptation to Satan, 'still looked on Satan as one who, as in Job, was strictly limited by God's overriding sovereignty, and .. could indeed be an instrument of the ultimate divine will'.²⁴ In Matthew 4:1 it was

²² Paul's epistles focus on the impact of Christ's work on the powers rather than Satan, but in Ephesians he is the powers' ruler so their defeat is his. 1 Pet. 3:18-22 also relates Christ's work to the powers' defeat rather than Satan's.

²³ G.B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: A. & C. Black, 1966), p. 36.

²⁴ H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (London: Marshall, Morgan &

the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the devil, for it was God's purpose that his Son be tested (cf. Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1). In 1 Cor. 5:5 Satan's destructive hostility is exploited in the disciplining of a church member (cf. 1 Tim. 1:20); and in 2 Cor. 12:7 the malevolence of an angel of Satan, probably a demon, serves the divine purpose in keeping Paul from becoming conceited and so ensuring his continuing usefulness as a servant of Christ. What Calvin says of Satan accurately reflects the entire biblical witness:

Because with the bridle of his power God holds him bound and restrained, he carries out only those things which have been divinely permitted to him; and so he obeys his creator, whether he will or not, because he is impelled to yield him service wherever God impels him.²⁵

These two perspectives explain the relative unimportance of demonology in the New Testament. The fact and extent of Satan's domination of the present age, and the reality, severity and variety of his maleficent activities are not to be denied. What is important however are the human sins upon which Satan's power is founded, and the sovereign creator against whom those sins are committed and within whose sovereign jurisdiction Satan operates.

CONCLUSION

The two perspectives just discussed have significant implications for the understanding of the gospel and of the power of Satan in the African context. First they mean that men and women are not primarily victims of hostile supernatural forces but sinners responsible for their own condition; Satan is parasitic upon human sin and would have no power over humanity were it not for such sin. Such an understanding greatly diminishes the responsibility of evil powers for the human condition. It does not deny the reality of the power and animosity of Satan and his hosts, but puts them in a proper biblical perspective. Any proclamation of the good news must indeed address the menace that evil powers present to mankind, but that menace must also be seen in its true proportions. The great problem of humanity does not lie outside of itself in the hostility of Satan and his kingdom, but within in rebellion and sin.

Furthermore, and related to what has just been said, the menace that Satan presents is not primarily that of physical affliction, although he is indeed a murderer and destroyer, but that of moral and spiritual destruction. He inspires the wickedness of mankind and blinds the eyes of unbelievers to prevent their

Scott, 1982), pp. 143-4.

²⁵ J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.14.17.

responding to the gospel; and he tempts believers to sin and doctrinal falsehood in order to undermine their testimony and cause havoc within the church. The purpose of his affliction of Job was not primarily to hurt him physically but to destroy him spiritually by so undermining his faith that he would curse God. Similarly when Peter warned his readers about Satan the roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) his great concern was not the physical persecution Satan was at that time inspiring against them, but the danger that such affliction might bring about their spiritual defection. The true nature of the danger posed to humanity and particularly to the people of God by the kingdom of darkness must be correctly appreciated if it is to be appropriately and effectively resisted.

Finally, Satan is and always has been subject to the sovereign rule of God. In this respect the work of Christ could not alter his status for it did not, and could not, add to divine sovereignty. It is not the doctrine of redemption but that of creation which affirms God's absolute rule and Satan's complete subordination. It is the awareness of this subordination that inhibits demonological speculation throughout the Bible. Consequently the spirit and occult world that emerges in the Bible receives much less attention than does that of African traditional religion or of any other traditional religion, which is particularly significant given the preoccupation with the demonic in the cultures surrounding that in which the biblical writings took shape. The dynamic monotheism of the biblical writers means that lesser spirits and occult activity are deliberately demoted, becoming issues of *relatively* peripheral concern. They understood the invisible world as a monarchy in which God exercises omnipotent rule over spirits and men both good and evil.

The fixation of African traditional religion with spirits, witchcraft and sorcery, stands in sharp contrast with this biblical reticence; while in the Bible the spirit and occult world is effectively eclipsed by God, in African traditional religion the situation tends rather to be reversed. In the living experience of its adherents it is the world of lesser spirits and of witches and sorcerers which is of dominant spiritual and existential concern; there is 'a dependence upon lesser spiritual causalities because there is no adequate recognition that the great power of the one God could really be concerned with this or that side of one's own small life.'²⁶

Consequently African traditional religion gives the impression of an anarchy of spirits and of occult forces, over which God may in principle be supreme, but in which he rarely if ever intervenes. This in turn explains the fear

²⁶ A. Hastings, *African Christianity* (London and Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976), p. 74.

and uncertainty often experienced in traditional Africa, for the individual feels that he is at the mercy of a variety of unpredictable spiritual forces whose activities are in practice largely unrestrained. It is the Old Testament vision of the sovereign, mighty God and of his providential rule over the whole of creation that provides the Christian with his initial assurance in the face of such concerns, an assurance which is reinforced with the realisation that in his death and resurrection Christ has triumphed over every dark and threatening power. Nothing, not even angels, demons and powers, can separate him 'from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:37-39).

THE MODERN QUEST FOR AN AFRICAN THEOLOGY REVISED IN THE LIGHT OF ROMANS 1:18-25

Part I

Exegesis of the Text

Alfred Muli

In order to make the Scriptures relevant for each generation, the church must continually search the Word of God diligently in order to apply its teaching to the contemporary issues for each culture and in each generation. However, relevant biblical theology must be continually checked and corrected. In the modern quest for a relevant African Christian Theology many have become overly optimistic about the moral nature of man and his religion, ignoring the teachings of Scripture. In this first article of a two-part series, Pastor Alfred Muli examines Romans 1:18-25 which serves as a lodestar in the evaluation of African Traditional Religion and the shaping of African Christian Theology.

INTRODUCTION

In the early seventies the late Dr. Byang Kato observed carefully that in the following ten years Africa would be a theological battle-field. Two decades

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have passed since the unexpected and sudden death of Kato in 1975 - who is, so to speak, the father of African evangelicalism. The fulfillment of this prophesy has gone way beyond the limit of the predicted period.

The last two decades have witnessed vigorous and aggressive theological discussions in Africa. The main issue has been the quest for a Christian theology relevant to the African situation.

These deliberations have been advanced through various methods by both Africans and expatriates, evangelicals and non-evangelicals. First, many books and journal articles on African theology have been published. Some of the leading African writers include John S. Mbiti, J.N.K. Mugambi, and Bolaji Idowu. Those represent the non-evangelical camp. On the evangelical side we can name theologians such as Tite Tienou, Tokunboh Adeyemo and Cornelius Olowola.

Second, research and position papers on Christian theological reflection in the African situation are presented in symposia, seminars and conferences. For example Nairobi Fellowship of Theological Colleges (NFTC) in Kenya, which organises such events; and the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians. There are a large number of organisations which deal with African theological issues: World Student Christian Federation, African Region; and the All African Council of Churches (AACC) which represent some of the bodies which are not exclusively evangelical. Some evangelical organisations include Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), formally called Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM); Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya (EFK); and Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA).

Several titles have been proposed to describe the content of this Christian theological reflection in Africa. They include "Africana Theologia," "African Theology," "African Christian Theology" and "Christian Theology in African Context."

We can mention several benefits of this theological quest. It raises important issues with which evangelicals have to wrestle to make Christian theology authentically biblical and authentically African. Social exploitation and oppression, human dignity and identity, poverty, cultural values, and African traditional religious beliefs and practices are some of the issues which need to be addressed. These issues arise from the socio-political, economic, and religious situations of Africa.

The African Traditional Religion (ATR) related issues include the following questions: Did the Africans have a knowledge about God before the coming of Christianity? If they did, what kind of knowledge did they have? Is ATR a legitimate response to General Revelation? Did the Africans worship God in ATR? Can ATR be described as idolatry? The objective is to address the real needs of the Africans, as it were, to scratch where it itches. But do we not also need to scratch where it ought to itch?

The modern quest for African Theology among non-evangelicals demonstrates a major theological pitfall. The issue is that there is a defective view of the moral condition of fallen mankind. That is the root cause of their biblically unfounded proposals. A defective substructure produces a defective superstructure. A wrong analysis of sickness leads, inevitably, to a wrong prescription of medicine and often leads to death.

This unbiblical view of the moral condition of fallen mankind is evident in a number of ways. African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices are exalted and praised without careful consideration of the biblical teaching. Cultural values are elevated at the expense of the Bible. Salvation is viewed primarily as liberation from socio-economic and political exploitation to a self-realisation of full human identity and integrity. The Bible is used as a proof-text in support of their defective theology.

The main focus of this article is to deal with this theological pitfall. This article proposes that proper understanding of the biblical teaching of the moral condition of fallen mankind is a fundamental presupposition for the formation of a Christian theology relevant to the African situation.

This article will undertake to examine Paul's teaching on the moral condition of fallen mankind by an exegesis of Romans 1:18-25. Part II of this article, appearing in the next issue of AJET, will draw implications for the modern quest for an African Theology and then make a conclusion. A proposal of a methodology toward an African Theology is included at the end.

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 1:18-25

Context

The recipients of Paul's epistle to the Romans are described as "the ones loved by God and called to be saints" (1:7). They were The Roman Christians. After a careful study of the historian Suetonius, Crainfield observes: "It is clear that there must have been Christians in Rome for, at the very least,

three or four years before the time when Romans was written" (Crainfield, *Romans*, ICC, p.16). They were converted through the presence of Christians who were performing their secular duties in the city (Crainfield, p.17).

Most commentators believe that this church had not received apostolic teaching before, especially on salvation. For example, Crainfield rightly observes that neither in Romans nor any other New Testament book "is there any allusion to an initial evangelisation in Rome by any particular missionary or missionaries" (Crainfield, p.17). Hence, Paul's main purpose of writing the epistle was "to present a complete and detailed statement of the gospel message he proclaimed" (Witmer, "Romans," p. 436-437).

There is a question about the ethnicity of the recipients: whether they were Gentile or Jewish Christians and which group constituted the majority. Crainfield and Murray correctly hold that the recipients were predominantly Gentiles with the Jews constituting a substantial minority (cf Murray, *The Epistle*, xx.xxii). Sometimes, Paul refers specifically to Gentiles (2:14; 9:24) and other times to Jews (4:1, 9:7;1). So Paul's readers include the two ethnic groups.

The text in question is an integral part of the passage, describing the need for the righteousness of God (1:18-3:20). The concept of the righteousness of God is mentioned in the preceding passage (1:16-17) in reference to the declaratory righteousness as a gift of grace from God which is received through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The righteousness from God is needed because all mankind is condemned (1:18-32), including the moral man (2:1-16) and the Jew (2:17-3:20). At this point it is important to exegete the passage in order to provide a precise statement of the whole text.

Exegetical Ideas

The content of Paul's teaching about the moral condition of fallen mankind is that man is under the wrath of God because he has access to the revealed truth about God, but he has turned to idolatry.

I. Fallen Mankind is Under God's Wrath (vs.18).

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness."

Objects of God's Wrath: The first interpretive problem is, "Who is Paul describing by the term, "men" ? Some commentators think Paul is referring to the Gentile world exclusively. These include men like William Hendriksen,

Charles Hodge, and John Murray. Murray, for example, asserts: "The revelation of wrath contemplated is restricted to the particular class or division of mankind [namely] the Gentile nations" (Murray, *The Epistle*, p.36). These proponents argue that traits, such as worship of images (vs.23), and deriving knowledge from nature (v.19,20), are characteristic of Gentiles.

On the other hand, some commentators like C.E.B. Crainfield, C.H. Dodd and C.K. Barrett, believe that the passage describes the whole of fallen mankind. For example, Dodd comments: "The impiety and wickedness of men is hindering the truth about the nature of God, which is native to the human mind from having its due effect in the life of human society" (Dodd, *The Epistle*, p. 24). This appears to be the correct view. Paul does not mention the term Gentile or Greek in the passage (v.18-32). Instead he uses the general designation, "men" (vs.18). The catalogue of sins mentioned were committed by both Jews and Gentiles (2:1). Crainfield's conclusion is correct that, "Paul himself reckoned that by describing the obvious sinfulness of the heathen he was, as a matter of fact, describing the basic sinfulness of fallen man...." (Crainfield, *Romans*, p.105).

In a similar language F.F. Bruce rightly comments thus: "Paul's aim is to show that the whole of humanity is morally bankrupt, unable to claim a favorable verdict at the judgement bar of God, desperately in need of his mercy and pardon" (Bruce, *The Epistle*, p.82).

Heathenism is used sometimes in a limited sense to refer to world religions other than Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. In this article the term, "heathen," will be viewed with reference to fallen mankind in general. It will refer to all people in the world who have not received the righteousness from God by grace through faith in Christ.

Hence, Paul in this text presents detailed teaching on the moral condition of fallen mankind. The text in question will be approached through an analysis and commentary, phrase by phrase.

Paul's teaching puts into perspective the heresy of universalism, pluralism, and inclusivism.

The wrath (*οργή*) of God is also mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Jn. 3:36; Rom. 9:22; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:1; 1 Thess. 1:10). It is used in reference to the righteous indignation of the perfectly loving and good God against the sinfulness of fallen man. Wuest views *οργή* (wrath) in terms of God's attitude. In his words: "*οργή* is not punishment of sin but God's attitude towards it" (Wuest, *Word Studies*, p.29).

John Stott correctly describes the wrath of God as, "His holy hostility to evil, his refusal to condone it or to come to terms with it, his just judgement upon it" (Stott, *The Message*, p.72).

God's wrath is different from human anger and free of those poisonous ingredients such as uncontrollable emotion, animosity, malice, desire to revenge, fury, rage, selfishness or sudden outbursts of anger. These negative elements of human anger are contrary to the nature of a perfectly loving God (Ps. 18:30; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

Paul teaches that the wrath of God is manifested upon the perpetrators of ungodliness ($\alpha\sigma\beta\varepsilon\iota\alpha$) and unrighteousness ($\alpha\delta\imath\kappa\iota\alpha\nu$) of men.

The word, "all" is used to embrace both "godlessness" and "wickedness". It seems from the context that the two terms are used as two designations of the same concept with the aim to "afford a more rounded description of it than either gives by itself" (Cranfield, p.112). The two terms describe all sin, every form of rebellion against the sovereign God, as the object of God's wrath.

Paul goes further to describe the essential character of the sinfulness of mankind. Fallen "men suppress the truth by their wickedness." "Suppress" ($\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\xi\omega\tau\omega\nu$) means "to hold down, to hold captive, to assault" (LK 4:42), "to hinder" (2Thes. 2:6-7) or "to come in full possession of" (Mt. 21:38). In our context it refers to "hinder" in the sense of suppressing. Fallen mankind has suppressed the truth of God, which is made manifest in the created order (vss.19-20) by his wickedness (vs.18) evident in his idolatry (vss. 21-25). The word is a present participle in the attributive position. A "relative clause" translation seems best to suit this context. It should then be rendered, "who suppress". So fallen mankind continually suppresses the truth of God in his wickedness. The word, "truth" ($\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\varepsilon\iota\alpha\nu$), refers to the objective truth of God.

Fallen men "have made an a-priori decision to live for themselves, rather than for God and others, and therefore stifle any truth which challenges their self centeredness" (Stott, p.72). Cranfield summarizes it all: "Sin is always an insult upon the truth of God" (Crainfield, p.112). Paul then proceeds on to teach about the revealed truth about God.

II. The Revealed Truth about God is Available to All Fallen Mankind (vss. 19-20).

"... since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Paul teaches that fallen mankind has access to the knowledge of God through nature and is therefore without excuse.

A. Fallen mankind has the knowledge about God (vss. 19-20a).

These two verses are basic in the theology of General Revelation, though it probably was not Paul's main purpose here to give an elaborate teaching on it. In this connection Barrett observes that, "It is not Paul's intention to establish a natural theology; nor does he create one unintentionally" (Barrett, *A Commentary*, p.35).

Some interpreters hold that these two verses give the reason for God's wrath. Others see them as a justification of the fact that men do indeed have sufficient knowledge of the truth about God in the General Revelation. Since the two ideas seem to come out clearly from the passage without causing any significant effect on its meaning we would endorse both. The revealed truth about God is available to fallen mankind and, therefore, they are justly under God's wrath. This is the essence of Paul's teaching in these two verses. Let us analyze the verses clause by clause.

1. Paul teaches that fallen men are justly under God's wrath because they have suppressed that which is knowable about God and is evident among them (vs.19).

What does Paul refer to by the phrase, "that which is knowable about God" (*το γνωστον*)?

In this context the word seems to refer to experiential knowledge which is gained through ascertaining the truth about God by way of examining the created order which God has made available for the purpose of divine manifestation (vss. 19-20).

The main problem here is the extent of this knowledge. We will evaluate several commentators here for the sake of clarity. We should bear in mind that a defective exegesis of this "knowledge" may lead to a major theological pitfall.

Vincent says το γνωστον refers to "that which is knowable... signifying the universal objective knowledge of God as the Creator which is, more or less, in all people" (Vincent, *Word Studies*, p.15).

It must, however, be noted that Paul is not advocating a belief that fallen mankind is capable in himself of objective knowledge of God. This is evident in man's response. He has instead suppressed the truth (vs.18), and turned to ungodliness (vss. 21-25).

The Psalmist knew this when he prayed, "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law" (Ps. 119:18 A.V.). Finite mankind cannot have a meaningful knowledge of the infinite without God's special disclosure. God has to take the initiative to open our eyes.

Crainfield's observation is significant. He says that Paul here refers to that which is knowable about God by man with the aim to safeguard "the truth of the mysteriousness and hiddenness of God" (Crainfield, p.113).

So we need to note that, though the revealed truth is made available, something remains unknowable as Shedd declares, "το γνωστον denotes all that is knowable without written revelation; and also implies that there is something absolutely unknowable (Shedd, *A Critical*, p.20).

This knowledge is limited in degree and content. To render the words το γνωστον, as "what may be known", as does the New International Version and the King James Version, seems to stretch Paul's teaching too far. Hodge is correct in commenting that Paul "does not mean to say that everything that may be known concerning God was revealed to the heathen, but simply that they had such a knowledge of them as rendered their impiety inexcusable" (Hodge, p.36).

This revealed truth about God is manifest and made known to all mankind everywhere, from the observable handiwork of God's visible creation. In this connection Dodd is right to say that "the created universe offers sufficient evidence of its divine origin" and that from it we can surely behold something "like a great thought of a mind beyond our own" (Dodd, *The Epistle*, p.25).

To summarize this, "what may be known" (το γνωστον), therefore, refers to that which is knowable about God, not that which may be known. It is a general and limited knowledge, limited to the extent of what God has made

manifest in the visible creation. In this context, το γνωστον points to God's invisible attributes in verse 20. These will be discussed latter.

εν αυτοις can correctly be translated with an internal nuance as "in them" or "with them" or with an external nuance as, "in their midst" or "among them". There has been a significant debate among commentators in determining which rendering correctly interprets the word in this context. Three schools of thought are represented here. The majority of them advocate the outward nuance, while others take the inward, and still others advocate both ideas.

It seems best to interpret εν αυτοις with both meanings, "among them" and "within them." For men to perceive clearly that which has been externally manifested, the internal response of mind and conscience is presupposed. Murray accurately asserts: "If it is revelation to us it must also be in us because that which makes it to us is that which is in us, namely, mind and heart" (Murray, p.38). The revelation is external through what has been created but its perception is internal in man's mind (vss.20-21).

Paul repeats the idea of revelation in the words, "for God made it evident to them" (vs. 19). Paul's reason is twofold here. First, he probably intends to point out that the work of revelation belongs to God alone. Revelation is "the result of His own deliberate self disclosure and not something in anyway independent of His will" (Crainfield, p.114). God reveals himself willingly. His act of revelation is in conformity with his will.

Secondly, Paul probably wants to show that without God's intervention man is totally incapable of knowing God. It is "not as if men acting on their own initiative could have discovered God, but God has made known to them whatever in area of creation can be made known about him" (Hendriksen, p.69). Although God has made himself known, in his fallen condition, man is unable to know God (cf.1 Cor. 1:21).

2. Paul explains how the revealed truth about God had been made manifest to all mankind (vs. 20a).

The revealed truth about God is "his invisible qualities" (το αορατα), namely, "his eternal power and divine nature." vs.20.

Kasemann thinks that "invisible qualities" (το αορατα) refers specifically to God in his divine invisibility which distinguishes him from the cosmic being. He asserts: "God remains invisible here to the extent that we cannot get power over him or calculate him metaphysically" (Kasemann, p.42).

The truth that God is indeed invisible is a clear biblical teaching. The Bible teaches that God is invisible (1 Tim. 1:17, Heb. 11:27), no one has seen him (Jn. 1:18), and that Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

It seems that Kaseman approaches the three clauses ("invisible qualities," "eternal power" and "divine nature"), as referring to three distinct but specific attributes of God. He sums them up to refer to the divine invisibility of God. But the natural flow of verse 20 does not seem to draw that conclusion. Again even if it were the case, the term, "divine nature," is inclusive of all the divine properties of God as will be demonstrated latter

It would seem, therefore, that "his invisible qualities" refers to the invisible attributes of God, namely, his "eternal power" and "divine nature." The "invisible qualities" (*το αօρατα*) constitute a summary of the essence of God and the manifold attributes which distinguish him (Godet, 103).

The word, *αιδιος* ("eternal power") in the New Testament occurs only here and Jude 6. It refers to the everlasting and eternal character of God. This is not a strange concept in the Bible.

Murray makes several comments about the eternal power and divinity of God. He observes that the eternal power is specific and refers to the eternity of God's being and power. Divinity (or "divine nature") on the other hand, is generic and general. "It reflects on the perfection of God and denotes the totality of that which God is as a being, possessed of divine attributes" (Murray, p.39).

Hence Paul does not seem to have in mind some specific attributes of God which have been manifested in the revealed truth about God as Kaseman thinks. He is talking about the sum total of divine attributes which characterise God. This totality of God's nature is clearly seen and understood.

Paradoxically, God's invisible attributes are actually seen and understood through His creation. Barrett is correct to comment that through the perception of the eye and of the mind "the being of God is inwardly perceived" (Barrett, p.36).

So in verses 19-20a Paul teaches that the revealed truth about God is available to all mankind because they have access to the knowledge. He goes further to teach that men are without excuse for their godlessness.

B. Fallen Mankind is "Without Excuse" for his Godlessness (vs. 20b).

Paul teaches that fallen mankind is "without excuse" for his godlessness.

Two views have been proposed for the proper interpretation of this clause. Some commentators approach it as a purpose clause. These include Murray and Barrett. Others think that it is a result clause. Hodge and Crainfield are good examples.

Those who approach it as a purpose clause think the clause must be rendered, "so that they might be without excuse". Barrett, for example, believes Paul is saying: "God may rightly visit men with wrath because, though they have not had the advantages of hearing the gospel, they have rejected that rudimentary knowledge of God that was open to them" (Barrett, p.36).

This purpose is seen as part of the sovereign ordination of God. Murray asserts, "If men do not glorify and worship God they have no excuse for their impiety, and that the impiety might be without excuse is the design of the manifested glory" (Murray, p.40).

Murray is convinced that any objection to this view in favour of result undermines the sovereignty of God as ruler of human history. He strongly believes that, "We cannot eliminate from the all inclusive ordination and providence of God the design which is presupposed in the actual result" (Murray, p.40).

There are three significant objections to this view. First, the verb, εἰναι (*to be*), is a present infinitive from εἰμί (*I am*). It should, therefore, be translated "they are" but not with a subjunctive force, "they might be."

Second, an infinitive of purpose cannot be in the present. In discussing the purpose use of the infinitive, the standard Greek grammar books do not give any example in the present tense (cf. Dana & Mantey, *A Manual*, p. 214-215).

The third objection is that though it is theologically true that God's sovereignty governs all human history, the interpretation of the clause as purpose does not seem to fit the context. Paul does not seem to be saying that the purpose for the divine manifestation is to render man without excuse. Again to interpret the clause as result does not undermine God's sovereignty.

The interpretation of the clause as infinitive of *result* seems to fit the context better than purpose. With the *result* nuance the clause will be rendered: "So that they are without excuse."

On the basis of the revelation of truth about God men are without excuse for their ungodliness (vs.18). Paul does not imply that God's purpose of self-divine disclosure in nature is to render man's rebellion inexcusable. It is rather that, "since this revelation has been made, they have, in fact, no apology for their ignorance and neglect of God" (Hodge, p.37).

All men have access to knowledge about God but have wilfully rejected or ignored it. Though they would not have gained full knowledge about God the point of the text is the result, that, they are without excuse. Crainfield makes an excellent comment in this regard: "The result of God's self manifestation is not a natural knowledge of God on man's part, independent of God's self-revelation in His word, a valid though limited knowledge, but simply the exquisiteness of men in their ignorance" (Crainfield, p.116).

εἰς ("so that") with an infinitive usually expresses result (cf. Heb. 11:3). In fact, the whole of verse 20 is an explanation of that result. It gives reason for that result.

Paul's teaching in those verses (19-20) is that fallen men have access to knowledge about God through nature with the result that they are without excuse for their ungodliness. We can then correctly draw a theological conclusion that the revealed truth about God in nature is not salvific. But yet fallen mankind is inexcusable under God's judgement. Paul now gives an elaborate exposition of men's ungodliness.

III. Fallen Mankind has Turned to Idolatry (vss. 21- 25).

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator - who is forever praised. Amen."

Paul's teaching in this section is that fallen men have ignored the revealed truth about God and turned to idolatry both implicitly and explicitly.

A. The Implicit Idolatry (vss. 21-22).

Implicit idolatry here means characteristics which are suggestive of idolatry. We will discuss four of them.

1. They do not glorify God (vs. 21).

In this verse we have the biblical philosophy of the pattern which leads to false religion. This pattern consists of the degeneration and degradation of fallen mankind from the revealed knowledge about God resulting in religious perversity, namely idolatry. Mayer correctly says,

For heathenism is not the primeval religion from which man might gradually have risen to knowledge of the true God, but is, on the contrary, the result of a falling away from the known original revelation of the true God in His works (Quoted by Murray, p.41).

False religions are a degeneration from an original monotheism. Some observable rationale, as Dodd says, is that even among the false religions of Africa, India and Australia, "A belief in some kind of Creator - Spirit subsists along with the superstitious cults or gods or demons, and often with a more or less obscure sense that this belief belongs to a superior or a more ancient order" (Dodd, p.26).

Paul's teaching is that fallen men ignored the knowledge about God and did not "glorify God" nor "gave him thanks."

The Greek word for "glory" ($\delta\omega\xi\alpha$) has its equivalent in the Old Testament. The Hebrew equivalent for $\delta\omega\xi\alpha$ is *kabod* which has the "primary sense of divine glory which comes to expression in God's acts in creation and history" (Bromiley, *TNDT*, p.179). This meaning has been carried in the New Testament.

The word, $\delta\omega\xi\alpha$, is used five times in Romans. Here in Romans 1:21 the word is used of the response which men owe to God by praising Him and recognizing Him as God, their Creator and Lord of their life (cf. 15:16). In this case man is the subject and God is the object of the glory. Fallen man has failed to glorify God the Creator (v.20-21). Murray correctly gives the meaning of the term. He says:

To glorify God as God is not to augment God's glory or add to it, it means simply to ascribe to God the glory that belongs to him as God, to give to him in thought, affection, and devotion the place that belongs to him in virtue of the perfection which the visible creation itself makes known (Murray, p.41).

This is the kind of glorification that Paul says fallen man failed to give to God. Failure to glorify God is a form of implicit idolatry.

2. Their thinking is futile (vs. 21).

Paul teaches that fallen mankind became "futile" in their "thinking" (or "reasoning").

The Greek word for "futile" is common in the Septuagint, representing a variety of meanings. It may mean "in vain," "fruitless" (Mt. 15:9) or "groundless," "deceptive" (1 Cor. 15:17), or "erroneous, corrupt, perverted" (1 Pet. 1:18). The word is used in connection with idolatry where idols are referred to as "mere useless nothings" (Acts 14:15).

Paul is, therefore, saying that their thinking became perverted and actually fell into the error of religious idolatry. The futility of their thinking was evident in their "reasoning" and "thinking."

It is as a result of their failure to recognize and to glorify the true God that their thinking and reasoning were perverted, in fact idolatrous. The picture painted here is that "man was unwilling to recognize a Lord; he chose to be Lord himself, and to glorify himself" (Barrett, p.36-37).

Their ignorance of the revealed knowledge about God resulted in the perversion of their thinking. A loss of touch with reality inevitably leads to the corruption of human thoughts. They are incapable of rational thought about the true God.

Murray correctly observes that, "In their evil or wicked reasoning they became destitute of any fruitful thought". To sum it all he states, "The mind of man is never a religious vacuum; if there is the absence of the true, there is always the presence of the false" (Murray, p.42). Paul's teaching, therefore, is that human thinking is idolatrous.

3. Their faculties are corrupted (vs. 21).

Paul teaches that their "foolish hearts" were "darkened" (vs. 21).

Note that the phrase, "foolish" (or "undiscerning") "hearts", means "destitute of understanding, uncomprehending, undiscerning, unintelligent, dull" (Mt. 15:16), "reckless and perverse, unenlightened and heathenish" (Rom. 10:19). In our context it means void of understanding. The term is used here in contrast to understanding (vs. 21 cf. vs. 22).

The word, "heart" (*καρδία*), is used in reference to the inner-self of man including his faculties of intellect or thought, volition or will, and emotion or feelings (cf. Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 7:3; Col. 4:8). So by "heart" Paul refers to the seat or totality of human faculties.

Paul's teaching is that since fallen man has failed to recognize and glorify God, all his faculties which are destitute of understanding have been rendered void of any true knowledge about God. He has "lost the insight into the nature of divine things... the light of divine knowledge" (Hodge, p.39). His "undiscerning heart" was "darkened."

4. They are fools in divine things (vs. 22).

Paul's teaching is that "although they claimed" to be wise, they became fools (vs. 22). There is a striking contrast between man's pretension and the fact of the matter. Elsewhere Paul contrasts the concepts of true wisdom and human folly (cf. 1Cor. 1:18-25).

Murray views Paul's teaching here as "an acute analysis of what the pretension of those whose hearts are alienated from God really are" (Murray, p.42). It is a striking fact to note that "the more they boasted of their wisdom, the more conspicuous became their folly" (Hodge, p.39). The next section will discuss the explicit idolatry of fallen mankind.

B. The Explicit Idolatry (vss. 23-25).

Introduction

Surely, there can never be greater folly than the worship of the creature instead of God. This way fallen mankind has sunk into the folly of the sin of idolatry. Bruce is right to say that foolishness "implies moral obtuseness rather than mere deficiency in intelligence" (Bruce, p.84).

The folly of idolatry is demonstrated and despised elsewhere in the Bible. After the flood men attempted to build a tower whose top would reach heaven (Gen. 11:4). The Syrians thought Jehovah was the god of the hills but not of the valley (1Kg. 20:23, 28). The heathen cry to idols which cannot in reality rescue them from distress (Isa. 46:6-7). Ironically, they create an idcl and worship it as their creator (Ex.32:4, 24; Isa. 3:9, 46:1).

Paul's teaching in the preceding section is that fallen man is involved in implicit idolatry in that he has ignored the revealed truth about God. He has failed to glorify God, turning to idolatrous thinking with his faculties which are

rendered void of understanding. He has, therefore, become foolish in his idolatry.

Martin Luther correctly asserts: "The sin of omitting that which is good leads to the sin of committing what is positively evil" (Luther, p.28). Omitting good results inevitably to committing evil. This provides us with an excellent introduction into this section where explicit idolatry of fallen mankind will be discussed.

Paul teaches that fallen mankind is actively involved in open idolatry. He exchanges the glory of God for images and worships creatures (vss. 23,25).

1. They exchange the glory of God for images (vs. 23).

Paul teaches that fallen mankind has "exchanged" the glory of the immortal God for images made of mortal creatures.

The word, "exchange," does not simply mean change. In this context it means "exchange" with the sense of substitution of one thing for another.

In this context, "the glory of God" refers to the self-revelation of the true God mentioned earlier (vss. 19-20). It points to the majesty and splendor of God. The glory of God was substituted for an "image," namely an object or idea made in the place of God.

In this verse Paul echoes the language used of Israel in reference to the making of the golden calf (Ex. 32) and forsaking the Lord their God (Jer. 2:11 cf Ps. 106:20). Such a substitution of the glory of God for the likeness of an image in form of man and beasts points to the irrationality and folly of fallen mankind.

2. They exchange truth for a lie (vs. 25).

In this clause Paul repeats the idea mentioned earlier in verse 23, probably for the purpose of explaining the point more clearly. We note an interesting parallelism between this clause and verse 23.

The "truth of God" refers, in this context, to the reality consisting of God himself and his self-manifestation, the truth that God has made known. Its antithesis is expressed in the term, "lie". The Greek word, ψευδεῖ, from which we derive the English prefix, "pseudo," means "lie, falsehood, or a false view of God." In the Old Testament the heathen gods are referred to as a lie (Jer. 13:25; 16:19; 10:14; Isa. 44:20). In the New Testament it is frequently used in the same sense.

Vine correctly comments that the use of the word in Romans 1:25 "stands by metonymy [change of word] for an idol" (Vine, p.664). Another similar New Testament usage is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:11. In this context it refers to a false god.

Godet sums up the discussion with the comment: "The abstract word 'lie' here denotes idol, that ignoble mask in which the heathen expose the figure of the All-Perfect" (Godet, p.108). On the contrary it is amazing to compare this with the exchange that takes place when men respond positively to God in the gospel (1 Thess. 1:9). Paul's teaching is that fallen men have exchanged the revealed knowledge about God for idols. He goes on to give further explanation of this idolatry.

3. They worship creatures (vs. 25).

Fallen men worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is forever blessed. Amen.

The clause, "worshipped and served the creature", is explanatory of how they exchanged the Creator God for an image, truth for a lie. Hence there is a parallelism. "The truth of God," corresponds to "the Creator," and the "lie" corresponds to the "creature." Elsewhere, "truth" corresponds to the "Creator" (Jn. 14:6; Ps. 31:5; Isa. 65:16), and "lie" to a "creature" or "idol" (Isa. 44:20).

The words, "worshipped and served," are key theological terms and need to be studied. The term for worship (*σεβοματι*) means to "worship, venerate, adore, to stand in awe or reverence in a devout, pious and dreadful manner." In this context it means "to venerate with devout reverence." The verb, (*λατρευω*) means "to serve with reference to rendering religious worship" (cf. Mt. 4:10, Lk.1:74).

Some commentators think the two terms refer exclusively to different things. They say *worship* is an internal practice and *service* an external practice. But this view does not seem to be accurate because worship can refer to both internal and external practice.

On the contrary, the two words express a single idea in general (worship) and specific (service) terms. Paul uses a similar style in the same text in the words, "glorify" (*εδοξασαν*) and "thanksgiving" (*ηυχαριστησαν*) (vs. 21).

So Paul is teaching that fallen mankind generally worshipped, in the sense of devout reverence, and specifically served, in the sense of cultic religious worship, the creature rather than the Creator. The basic idea is that

the reverence rightly due to God the Creator was accorded to images which are mere creatures.

In the wider context, idolatry does not only consist of offering to images the reverence rightly due to God. It is much broader. Hodge correctly comments: "Idolatry is made to include not merely the worship of false gods, but the worship of the true God by images" (Hodge, p.39). This additional aspect of idolatry is common in African Traditional Religion and Hindu worship. Though the aspect is not explicitly taught in our passage, it is implied in verses 23, 25.

On the contrary Paul ends his teaching with a powerful doxology. He accords God the Creator his rightful reverence and adoration.

This doxology is an affirmation to the effect that "transcendent blessedness belongs to God and the implication is that the dishonesty done by men does not detract from his intrinsic and unchangeable blessedness - God is blessed forever" (Murray, p.46). God deserves human worship as a divine prerogative. Although fallen mankind dishonours God through idolatry, He remains the only true object of reverence. Despite man's neglect, God remains forever blessed. Amen

By "Amen" the Apostle express the assent of his heart and mind in regard to the doxology.

In the foregoing exegesis we have seen clearly Paul's teaching about the moral condition of fallen mankind. Fallen mankind is under God's wrath for his godlessness. He is without excuse because God made the revealed truth about Himself manifest to him. Man has instead suppressed it and turned to idolatry.

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J. L. KRAPF A Personal Portrait in Memory of His Entry to East Africa. In 1844

Carl-Erik Sahlberg

The instruments used by God throughout church history to advance his Kingdom have been diverse and varied. None of them fit into the same mold, except their common devotion and obedience to Jesus Christ. This article reflects on one of those pioneers whose devoted life contributed to the opening of East Africa to the Christian gospel. We would do well to count the cost of bringing the gospel to Africa and remember that the same measure of devotion is required of the Church today if every "tribe, tongue and nation" in the world today is to have the same privilege as we have had through pioneers such as Johann Ludwig Krapf.

On the 7th of January in 1844, one hundred fifty three years ago, Johann Ludwing Krapf, together with his wife, Rosine, landed at Zanzibar after a hard sea voyage from Pangani. This marked the beginning of the modern missionary endeavour in East Africa and must therefore be honoured and remembered.

J.L. Krapf was a child of the Wurttemberg pietism in Germany, born in Derendingen on the 11th of January in 1810. After studies at the Basel Mission school, he was ordained in the Lutheran Church of Wurttemberg and worked as a pastor for a short time. After a sermon about the near-end of this world, his fellow pastors rebuked him for his "improper enthusiasm". He then resigned from his newly started career as a pastor. At the time of this life crisis he met the Swedish missionary, Peter Fjellstedt, who had been working for the Church

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Missionary Society (CMS) in South India, but now because of health problems lived and worked in Asia Minor with translation work. Fjellstedt asked the young Krapf to join him. That contact between them quickened Krapf's dormant interest in foreign missions. Krapf was approved by the CMS and was sent to Ethiopia in 1838 to replace a missionary who had recently died.

In Ethiopia Krapf was literally taken by a vision to reach the Oromo people (also called the Gallas) with the gospel. Krapf designated the Oromos as "the Germans of Africa" and thought, that if the gospel could reach them, it could reach the whole African continent. It may be that Fjellstedt had given him that vision, but this may be wrong. Krapf also had an idea of finding a big, mighty river, that would go through most of the African continent. Not so wrongly guessed, when one thinks of the Nile.

With his vision to reach the Gallas, Krapf came in 1838 to the kingdom of Shewa (or Showa or Shoa), close to present day Addis Ababa. Here he learned Amharic and had been earlier introduced to the Arabic language on his way from Cairo by an African.

His stay in Shewa was accompanied by many disappointments. The political disorder in the kingdom made every missionary attempt dangerous. Krapf also met suspicions from the people and the king. "Perhaps he was a disguised spy or colonizer?" Finally, the situation became too threatening for him and he left Ethiopia in 1842 and went to Cairo.

Now Rosine Dietrich enters the scene of J.L. Krapf. She came from Basel. Johann and Rosine had probably met when he studied theology there in the 1830's. They kept contact during his stay in Shewa. In 1839 Rosine bid farewell to her parents in Basel, when both she and the parents knew that it could be a farewell for the whole life. Fraulein Dietrich became Mrs. Krapf in Cairo in 1842. Rosine Krapf represents in her person all those many missionary wives, who rather anonymously and without chapters in mission histories, had to serve in the shadows of their famous husbands. But only God knows, how valuable their ministry was in the evangelistic, medical, charitable and educational field. The Krapf couple lived in Cairo and Aden, but never one day, I think, forgetting the vision to reach the Oromos one day. During these years on the Arabian peninsula their Arabic became almost fluent.

From Aden it was easy to cast their eyes at Zanzibar. Why? Because the island outside the East African mainland during the 19th century became the economical centre of the area, "the metropolis of East Africa". Zanzibar became a part of the Oman kingdom and in 1832 the Sultan moved there and made it the capital of his empire. The basis of its economy was the slave trade. About

25,000 slaves passed every year through the island. Most of them were taken from the south of the river Pangani on the mainland.

The Sultan of Zanzibar controlled the coastal area on the mainland and therefore Krapf found it necessary to go through him to get permission to work among the Gallas. So for that reason he and Rosine took the boat from Pangani to Zanzibar and went ashore there on the 17th of January 1844, a little more than one hundred and fifty three years ago.

The next day he had the opportunity to meet Sultan Seyyid Said. In an audience forum Krapf told the Sultan, using his Arabic language, of his plans of reaching the Galla people and telling them about Christianity and "other useful things". The Sultan was a courteous and attentive listener, but warned Krapf of all the dangers in reaching the Galla people. He, however, assured Krapf of all his support and protection and wrote a personal letter of recommendation to the Arab governors of the coast: "This comes from Seyyid Said; greetings to all our subjects, friends and governors. This letter is written on behalf of Dr. Krapf, a good man who desires to convert the world to God". How would his fellow Muslim leaders in Teheran today react to such tolerance and support of Christian missions?

Krapf was happy and started his search for a base for his Galla mission. In March 1844 he went to Tanga and Mombasa, finding that Mombasa was "best suited for that purpose." On 15th of May he sailed to Mombasa. After only two months in Mombasa he lost his wife Rosine and their new born daughter, due to malaria. To his employer, the CMS in London, Krapf wrote these famous words:

Tell our friends at home that there is on the East African coast a lonely grave. This is a sign that you have commenced the struggle.....As the victories of the Church are stepping over the graves...of her members, you may be more convinced, that the hour is at hand, when you are summoned to work upon the conversion of Africa from its Eastern shore.

Despite the loses of his family, Krapf decided to remain in East Africa and after some time made his base and home in Rabai, some nine miles inland and North of Mombasa among the Wanyika people. In June 1846 he was joined by a German fellow Christian, Johann Rebmann (1820-1876). In 1849 J.J. Erhardt and Johann Wagner also arrived, though Wagner unfortunately died the same year. Onwards we find these three single Germans in Rabai.

In 1986, during my missionary years in Tanzania, I had the privilege of seeing their home and their church, reminding me of these three "sad and other-worldly men" - to quote Roland Oliver in his excellent book, *The Missionary*

factor in East Africa (London, 1952). These men engaged in the first modern attempt of *Mission Dei* in the East African context.

Let us first of all state, standing there at their home in Rabai, that the direct evangelistic result was very meager. It was not until 1851 that the first convert was baptized. In 1859 there were only seven converts and when the British Consul at Zanzibar, Colonel Playfair, visited Rabai in 1864, he found only six baptized converts.

The reasons for the modest result were many. The hostility of the Arabs against Krapf was constant, especially once he became aware of and acted against the notorious slave trade. Generally it has also been said, that the broken and demoralized people among the mixed coastal population did not give a good precondition for a dynamic evangelization. Furthermore, it must be stated that the three missionaries - Krapf, Rebmann and Erhardt - did not very strongly stress the evangelistic work. They seem to have had no clear ambition to build up strong congregations, and their main time was used for journeys and translation work. But that does not at all mean that the Rabai impetus can be neglected. Its lasting contribution can especially be seen in three fields, which we may designate, "the three gifts of Rabai to East Africa".

1. THE FIRST GIFT OF RABAI: THE JOURNEYS.

The journeys of Krapf and especially Rebmann made this area familiar to future missionaries and explorers.

- a. To Kasigau, 150 Kilometres inland from Rabai, on Oct. 16-27, 1847, Rebmann went alone, as Krapf was sick. This journey has been said to have marked the historic beginning of Europe's scramble into east and central Africa.
- b. To Kilimanjaro, on April 27-June 11, 1848, Rebmann went alone, as Krapf again was sick. Rebmann was here the first European to see Kilimanjaro and reported back to London about snow on that mighty mountain. But the unbelieving scientific world in the West laughed at him - "never-melting snow on a mountain at the Equator"!
- c. To Usambara mountains, July 1848, Krapf traveled alone. In his talks with king Kimweri in Vuga, Krapf presented his idea of establishing one mission station among the Usambara people. Out of these talks came, however, no lasting result. Erhardt made an attempt to stay here in 1853, but left after only three months.

- d. To Machame, in April 1849, Rebmann traveled alone, this time to the southwestern slopes of Kilimanjaro. It turned out to be a tragic experience when the Machame king, Mankinga, out of fear or in a mood of cheating, wheedled Rebmann of all his money and equipment, including his umbrella that had been his only shelter against the pouring rain. Afflicted by despair, fever, dysentery and the constant rain, Rebmann abandoned the hope of proceeding to Unyamwezi and returned to Rabai. On leaving Machame, Rebmann and his party was, according to Machame custom, spat upon to the accompaniment of the words "Go in peace". Rebmann never returned to Machame, quite understandably.
- e. To the Kamba tribe, in Nov-Dec 1849, Krapf visited by himself. On this journey Krapf saw Mount Kenya, the second snow-caped mountain in East Africa. Krapf and Rebmann had, which often may be forgotten, a definite evangelistic goal with these journeys, namely to find that mighty river, which would lead up to central Africa and the Gallas.

Even if that goal was not achieved, these journeys had important results. First, they made everyone aware of the big slave trade with Kilwa Kivinge as the centre. Second, they encouraged explorers to come to East Africa. When the British explorers R. Burton and J.H. Speke arrived in Zanzibar in Dec. 1856, they had mostly been inspired by the map of the area, which Erhardt had published the same year. The journeys also made future missionaries acquainted with the routes that they could use in order to bring the gospel to the interior. In many aspects Krapf and his two friends prepared the way without being allowed themselves to walk further on that way.

2. THE SECOND GIFT OF RABAI: KRAPF'S DIARY, *REISEN IN OSTAFRIKA*.

In 1858 Krapf published his diary, entitled *Reisen in Ostafrika*. The English translation was entitled, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labour in East Africa* (1860). This big (and somewhat boring) book with over 500 pages inspired young Christians to take up the mantle of Krapf. For instance the early Methodist missionaries, Thomas Wakefield and Charles New, came to the Gallas in Kenya in the early 1860s, inspired by that book. This book also inspired pastor Karl Ittameier in Germany to found The Society for Evangelical-Lutheran Mission in East Africa, later transferred to the Leipzig Mission in 1892.

3. THE THIRD GIFT OF RABAI: THE TRANSLATIONS.

Almost directly after the death of his wife and child, Krapf devoted himself to the study of Kiswahili. In June 1846 he was ready to begin the translation of the New Testament. Within two years he had almost completed it. From Kiswahili the Bible translation work proceeded to vernacular languages. By 1848 he had translated the Gospel of Luke into Kinyika, the language spoken around Rabai. During a visit to London in 1850 he presented to the CMS a translation of the Gospels, the Book of Acts and Genesis in the Galla language.

In Rabai he furthermore prepared a Swahili grammar and arranged some four thousand words into a Swahili-English dictionary. Peter Falk in his survey, *The Growth of the Church in Africa* (Grand Rapids, 1979), describes Krapf as an energetic and excellent linguist. Both these good characteristics predestined him to be an energetic translator. The years at Rabai were really an intensive decade, filled with intensive linguistic work. When we read the Swahili Bible today of course we must acknowledge the energetic hands of J.L. Krapf.

Krapf suffered, as so many missionaries both before and after him, problems with his health. He had to leave Rabai in Oct. 1853 and go back to Germany, leaving Rebmann and Erhardt to continue the missionary work. He went home to Wurtemberg and settled down at Kornthal, the centre of the Wurtemberg pietism. From there he did all that he could do for his Oromo vision.

In April 1855 he was back in Ethiopia, but military operations stopped him from visiting Shewa. He turned northwards and passing Khartoum he fell seriously ill and barely reached Cairo, from where he returned to Germany.

In 1861 he returned to Mombasa to help the Methodist, Charles New, to establish a mission at Ribe. Between the years 1870-1877 the "British and Foreign Bible Society" published the whole New Testament, Exodus and the Psalms in Oromo. It was said to be a translation of Krapf, even if some, for example, Gustav Aren in his dissertation, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia* (Stockholm, 1978), suggests that Krapf only checked a translation, one already made by a secretary of Emperor Teodoros.

Anyhow, we get the picture an aging missionary Krapf, still young and powerful in his spirit and still living in his vision to reach the Galla people. Throughout his ministry he apparently had the power to persuade more hesitant souls. He inspired and persuaded Ludwig Harms to found "the Hermanburg Mission", which sent the first missionaries in modern times to Ethiopia in 1854. In 1865-1866 he inspired the newly founded Swedish Evangelical Mission to

open a work in Kunama in Eritrea.

Visionaries may be persuasive, but they more often appear to be too impractical and up in the blue, at least to many dull analyzers! Krapf was both persuasive and "impractical". But perhaps before such a risky task of first proclaiming gospel in an unknown and hostile environment, God had to use an impractical dreamer and enthusiast like Krapf. Analytical people with calculators in their hands would never have gone! But Krapf dared, as he went from Derendingen in Germany to Rabai in East Africa. He lost his wife and daughter, but never lost his Galla vision, even if it was never quite fulfilled. Like Paul, he was hindered to go, where he himself wanted to go (Acts 16). But none can deprive Krapf of the honour of having been what Boniface was for Germany, Frumentius for Ethiopia and Crowther for Nigeria - the missionary pioneer.

It can be very tempting to analyze mission history by considering only external factors such as the enlarged world horizon through trade and explorations, the economic upheaval in Europe, the Pietistic revival and the various missionary organizations. But in the bottom, *de finis*, we also have to reckon with the human, individual factor. In this respect it is appropriate to say that there would be no Christian mission in East Africa without the missionary Johann Ludwig Krapf. God had to send someone, and a boy from Derendingen went although he had to return back home sick to Germany. There in Kornthal, among his fellow Pietists and with Rebmann, who had returned almost blind in 1875, Krapf died on the 26th of November in 1881.

For me personally it was almost like a holy moment, when I stood at his grave in Kornthal a few years ago, but I could also imagine, that Krapf at his death had asked his risen Lord: "Lord, why was I not allowed to fulfill the Galla vision You had put down in my heart? Why had I always to be a man of autumn - stopped in Tajuma in November 1842, leaving Rabai sick in October 1853 and finishing my earthly life in November 1881?" But I also dared to guess, that the Lord answered him: "Johann, you are not a man of autumn, but a man of spring, because you brought spring, you brought dawn to East Africa".

And at his grave I could add something: "Mr. Krapf, when you finished your earthly life in 1881, your lifework and your book, *Reisen in Ostafrika*, inspired one pastor Karl Ittameier from Germany to found a missionary organisation, which was transferred to the Leipzig Mission, which started work in Tanzania. His son Eduard Ittameier went to Nkoaranga, near Arusha. One of the children who heard him teach there was Amulikyo Isaki. After some years she joined Christianity. She was baptized in 1936. On the 9th of September 1955 her daughter Aliliyo Abanetho was baptized. On the 25th of May in 1974 Aliliyo's daughter Kasure was baptized and I met her personally, when I served

as a missionary in Tanzania in the 1980's."

"So, I can assure you, Mr. Krapf, that you have great grand children in Tanzania today!" And perhaps Krapf from his heaven answered: "Praise God!" or in his mother tongue, "Lob den Herrn!" or in Kiswahili, "Bwana asifiwe!"

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THE ROOTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA: **THE EAST AFRICA SCOTTISH MISSION** 1889-1901

Watson A.O. Omulokoli

In a previous issue of AJET (14.2 1995) Professor Omulokoli researched the "Foundational History of the Africa Inland Church, 1895-1903." In a continuation of his historical research of the beginnings of churches in Kenya, Professor Omulokoli traces the roots of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Those early pioneering days of Christian missions were not meant for the timid or weak. Many laid down their lives for the cause of Christ. But beyond the human factor lay the sovereign God who paved the way and enabled his servants to lay the foundations of the Christian Church as we know it today.

INTRODUCTION: FORMATION OF THE EAST AFRICA SCOTTISH MISSION

The Presbyterian Church was not introduced to East Africa by the Church itself, but rather, by a group of committed lay Christians who formed a private Christian body known as the East Africa Scottish Mission (EASM). In 1888, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA) was formed and given a

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Royal Charter by the British government to conduct trade and commerce in East Africa.¹ As the Company took control over the territory under its jurisdiction, some of its directors felt that they should also turn their attention to the spiritual and moral well-being of the people in the region. Among these were, Sir William Mackinnon, who was the chairman of the Company, Mr. Alexander Low Bruce, who was a son-in-law of Dr. David Livingstone, and Sir T. Fowell Buxton, from a renowned philanthropic family.² With this in mind they formed a private Christian body in 1889 known as the East African Scottish Mission.³

The Mission was to work along comprehensive lines, combining evangelistic or spiritual, education, medical, and industrial elements. This was in tune with the thinking of Livingstone and others who believed that the best way of evangelising Africa was on the broad basis of Christianity, commerce, and civilization. The implementation of this kind of philosophy had proved successful at Lovedale and Blythswood in South Africa, as well as at Blantyre and Livingstonia in Malawi.⁴ It was in this connection that when the Mission was looking for a suitable leader, its directors asked the Free Church of Scotland to release to them Dr. James Stewart, the Principal of Lovedale, for one year to enable him to start the Mission's work in East Africa.

As the task of recruiting the missionary party went on, apart from Stewart, there was another person from the South African front. This was Dr. Robert Unwin Moffat, a grandson and a namesake of the famed missionary in Botswana, Robert Moffat. Together with these two, there was also a group of four people from Britain. These were, Thomas Watson as evangelist, John Linton as carpenter, John Grieg as engineer, and Cornelius Rahman as storekeeper. The two groups converged at Mombasa, and, together with George Wilson, an employee of the Company as guide, they eventually left for the interior on 19th September, 1891. Their instructions then were that they should establish the first mission station at Dagoretti, a place where the

¹ C.P. Groves. *The planting of Christianity in Africa. Volume Three, 1878-1914.* London. Lutterworth Press, 1964. First printed in 1955, p. 26.

² Roland Oliver. *The Missionary Factor in East Africa.* London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952, p. 170.

Mrs. Henry E. Scott. *A Saint in Kenya: A Life of Marion Scott Stevenson.* London. Hodder and Stoughton, 1932, p. 58, includes the name of Peter Mackinnon.

³ Robert MacPherson. *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya.* Nairobi: Presbyterian Church of East Africa, 1970, p. 21. Note: For much of the work, I have relied heavily, but not exclusively, on Macpherson.

⁴ C.P. Groves, p. 88: Mackay refers to this as the approach which takes care of the hand, head, and heart.

Company had set up an outpost which George Wilson had evacuated in early 1891, after about one year of existence.

INITIAL EFFORTS AT KIBWEZI

Contrary to the wishes and instructions of the directors of the Mission, Stewart seemed to have decided early against Dagoretti⁵ and instead, opted for an alternate site among the Kamba. Eventually, because of adverse reports at that time about the situation at Dagoretti, and since, on the surface, Kibwezi seemed to be the most suitable option, after the missionary party had stopped there for some time, Stewart decided to establish the first mission station at Kibwezi. Located on the Maasai-Kamba border, and about 200 miles from the coast, Kibwezi looked attractive when the group arrived there and made the decision on it in December, 1891. Soon, an agreement was reached in which the Mission purchased 300 acres of land there from Kilungu, the chief of the area.

Once the group had settled on Kibwezi as the right choice, the process of opening up the mission station began in earnest with the construction of the required buildings. These facilities included houses, stores, cow-sheds, a dispensary, and a church. One of the highlights of this early period was the completion of the construction of a church, which was duly opened in a special service on 10th March, 1892. It was after this first crucial landmark that Stewart went to Scotland on leave that month, leaving behind Dr. Moffat to be in charge of the work of the Mission.

While the work of establishing the Mission station at Kibwezi was going on, the Mission began to experience losses in the personnel sphere. First, in the very initial days, John Greg died of dysentery on 18th December, 1891. Then in March, 1892, Stewart went on furlough, and from there, relocated to his base in South Africa. This bad situation changed drastically for the worse in that after the personnel losses of the period of June, 1892 to January, 1893, Thomas Watson was the only person left in the work of the Mission. We learn that,

In June, Rebman seems to have had some sort of breakdown and had to be repatriated. John Linton fell ill and remained ailing for the rest of the year. George Wilson, having completed his assignment as guide, took charge of work on the Mombasa-Kibwezi road. In December, Dr. Moffat resigned to join Sir Gerald Portal's expedition to Uganda. In January,

⁵ Horace R.A. Philip. *A New Day In Kenya*. London. World Dominion Press, 1936, p. 15.

1893, Linton died. Watson was now, after only 13 months, the sole survivor at Kibwezi of the original missionary party.⁶

At the end of January, 1893, Watson was the lone missionary at Kibwezi. This state of affairs changed when three new people arrived within the next twelve months. First, on 15th March, 1893, a medical man, Dr. David Charters, and a gardener, Mr. John Paterson arrived as new recruits. Then on 12th January, 1894, a teacher, Victor Hill, and his wife joined the missionary team.

At the mission station, progress picked up in a number of directions. After some experiments in brick making, a brick dormitory was erected. With time, brick making became an established feature of the station's development, and in turn, this facilitated the building of many more permanent houses. In the agricultural sphere, Paterson's skills and competence were soon demonstrated as Kibwezi increasingly took on the picture of a thriving garden. With experiments in farming grapes and coffee, by 1896, the Mission was able to supply coffee seed for planting to two European farmers around Nairobi.⁷ All the while evangelistic activities were being promoted as well.

When the personnel situation appeared to be stable and the work at Kibwezi running smoothly, Watson traveled to the upper areas of Ukambani where he opened a new station at Nzoi in 1894. In this same year, however, two set-backs were experienced. To begin with, Dr. Charters, together with a guest went on a hunting trip near Kibwezi but never came back, possibly killed by the Maasai or wild animals.⁸ Next, in December, 1894, the Hills resigned on account of ill-health and returned home. When Charters disappeared, Watson was forced to abandon the new station at Nzoi and return to Kibwezi to take charge of the work there.

With the reduction in the missionary task force which had been experienced in 1894, it was truly encouraging when a medical person, Dr. Matthew Wilson, and a carpenter, Mr. James Lundie, arrived as new reinforcements in April, 1895. This restored the stability which was needed in the personnel level at Kibwezi. This same year, 1895, Watson and Dr. Wilson made an exploratory visit to Dagoretti with a view to gauging its suitability as the central station of the Mission. Their assessment was positive, and after

⁶ Robert MacPherson, p. 25.

⁷ C.P. Groves, p. 223: Paterson introduced the growing of the coffee crop in Kenya.

⁸ H.R.A. Philip, p. 16.

discussion with the rest of the missionary team at Kibwezi, it was agreed upon that it was important and urgent that the field headquarters of the Mission should be relocated from Kibwezi to Dagoretti. It was resolved, however, that implementation should wait until Watson was able to go home on furlough, during which period he would present to the Mission directors in Edinburgh the case for moving the main station from Kibwezi to Dagoretti.

Watson was not able to leave for Britain until June, 1896, and remained there for about fifteen months, arriving back at Kibwezi on 24th October, 1897. While in Scotland, he had been involved in a number of significant developments on behalf of the Mission. First, he had been ordained as a minister in the Free Church of Scotland. Secondly, he had assisted in inspiring the Mission's directing committee at home to capture a fresh vision for the work in East Africa. Since the death in 1893 of two key directors of the Mission, Mackinnon and Bruce, the Mission had suffered from lack of effective leadership. In the reorganisation which ensued, the committee received a new lease of life. Through this rejuvenation, for the first time, a code of regulations was issued, and 40,000 pounds was raised in the form of an endowment trust. Thirdly, and lastly, Watson was given permission by the committee to transfer the central station of the Mission from Kibwezi to Kikuyu, upon his return to Kenya.

TRANSFER OF THE MISSION TO KIKUYU

Watson returned from his furlough in Britain on 24th October, 1897, and joined Paterson, Lundie, and Dr. Wilson at Kibwezi. Three days later, on 27th October, he began making arrangements aimed at setting up the central station of the Mission at Kikuyu. First, he went to see the Commissioner-General of the Protectorate at Machakos, where the latter was then on a visit from his base in Mombasa. Next, he went to Kikuyu to hammer out some agreements with the local leaders. Although Watson had preferred a particular site near the Company's former fort at Dagoretti, the leader of the local clan, Munyua, a son of Waiyaki, offered him land at neighbouring Baraniki instead. It was on 2nd December, 1897, when Watson left Kikuyu, returned to Kibwezi, and from there proceeded to Mombasa to secure final authority from the government to acquire the site at Baraniki as offered by Munyua.

Getting approval from the government took long. When it had been finally granted, Watson left Kibwezi on 29th February, 1898, to open a station at Baraniki.⁹ He was joined there by Dr. Wilson on 30th March. In the mean time,

⁹ Robert MacPherson, p. 27: This marks the actual moving to the Kikuyu area and not August when Watson merely returned there after evacuating Kibwezi. See H.R.A. Philip, p. 17.

the piece of land purchased from Munyua, and the necessary stamp duty requirements from the government were fulfilled. As they cleared the land, they also began the construction of buildings. Then on Sunday, 10th April, they began holding English services in Fort Smith.

In December, 1897, Paterson had gone on leave. On the very day on which English services commenced at Fort Smith, news had come to Baraniki that Lundie, at Kibwezi, was sick from black water fever. Dr. Wilson went to attend to him at Kibwezi before proceeding to Mombasa to recruit some Swahili workers for various tasks. As it turned out, on his way back from Mombasa, Dr. Wilson himself died at Mtito Andei on 8th June, 1898, of black water fever. Watson was forced back to Kibwezi in June, and when Lundie's health continued to deteriorate, he repatriated him to Britain on 11th July. This meant that as had happened in January, 1983, Watson was alone again in July 1898, but now, with two stations to take care of. In the midst of this predicament, he evacuated the Kibwezi station on 27th August, 1898, and returned to Kikuyu.

Following his closure of Kibwezi on 28th August, 1898, Watson settled at Baraniki where he began making progress in his work. It was here that he was joined on 7th January, 1899 by two missionaries, Paterson, who was returning from leave, and Alexander Walker a carpenter who accompanied Paterson. An additional missionary, arrived on 27th February, in the person of a medical man, Dr. Homer. It was not long after his arrival that Dr. Homer disapproved of Baraniki as being an unhealthy location not suitable for the main station of the Mission. This eventually resulted in the relocation to the present site at Thogoto where thirty acres of land was purchased on 20th July, 1899, with a further ten acres bought in the following year. With this done, the construction of permanent mission buildings was embarked upon, facilitated by the availability of strong quarry stone on one hand, and the success in endeavours in brick-making on the other. When Thogoto was opened, however, Baraniki was not closed as Paterson remained there, continuing with his agricultural projects.

PROGRESS UNDER HARDSHIPS

There was wide-spread drought in the entire region in the last three years of the 1890's. In the case of Kikuyu and its vicinity, this was accompanied by famine, rinderpest and smallpox. These caused much havoc among the population and drove the mission to devising ways and means of dealing with this crisis. Because of the complications which smallpox had contributed to the combined difficulties, it was estimated that by April, 1900, about 50% of the population at Kikuyu had died. An appeal for famine relief was made to the directors of the Mission in Scotland. When the financial assistance for this

purpose was released towards the end of 1899, those on the actual scene set up a famine relief camp at Thogoto on 8th January, 1900, under Watson, with another one at Baraniki, operated by Paterson and Walker.

The tragedies of drought, famine, rinderpest, and smallpox not only issued into famine relief on the part of the Mission, but also provided opportunities for assisting the surrounding community in other ways. At one level, in May, 1900, Mrs. Watson started a day school for refugee children, and in another direction, an evening school was set up to serve the young men who were workers in the mission in the day time.¹⁰ This laid the foundation for the educational work of the Church, which was to prove to be a very significant facet of its endeavours in later years. While all this was going on, the English Sunday services which Watson had started in 1898 at Fort Smith were maintained. Then, when normalcy returned after the years of struggle under drought, famine, and disease, Sunday services in Kiswahili were started at Thogoto on 19th August, 1900. With the confidence of the local Kikuyu people having been gained, the Mission seemed to be set on a path of progress and prosperity.

These bright prospects were, however, jolted by crucial occurrences on the personnel scene in 1900. Earlier, Watson had traveled to Mombasa where he had married Minnie Cunning on 18th December, 1899, at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Church at the Freretown mission station. In the latter part of 1900, Dr. Homer resigned in September, then Walker had to be repatriated home, and finally, a tired and worn out Watson succumbed to an attack of pneumonia, dying on 4th December, 1900, almost a year after his wedding. This signified the end of an era.

Watson's death in December, 1900 left two people in the work of the Mission. One of these was John Patterson who continued with his agricultural activities at Baraniki, where he had remained and retained when Thogoto was opened as the main station. The other one was Watson's wife, Minnie, widowed after only one year of marriage. She took overall charge of Thogoto, running the two schools, one for refugee children during the day and the other one in the evenings for the young men working in the mission station. She even went on to ensure that the quarrying of stones continued, convinced that they would be needed for building in the near future.

With the death of Watson, the Mission had reached a crucial turning point in its life. In the past, even when the missionary force decreased, Watson was always there as the constant factor from the inception of the Mission. With

¹⁰ (Mrs.) Henry E. Scott, p. 59.

the disappearance of that main chain of continuity, very significant steps needed to be taken to propel the Mission beyond that moment of loss and deprivation.

HANDING OVER TO THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MISSION

The East Africa Scottish Mission had been founded in 1889 as a private venture by a group of concerned Christians. Although it had experienced a slump after two of its key directors died in 1893, it had sprung up to new vigour following Watson's encouragement during his furlough in 1896-1897. It was providential that even before his death towards the end of 1900, negotiations had been underway for the directors of the Mission to hand it over to the Church of Scotland to administer its work. With his death, the tempo for this take-over was accelerated.

Indeed, on 15th December, 1900, less than two weeks after his death, the directors formally approached the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the Church of Scotland on this matter. Although there was a long transitional period in which the details were being worked out, the basic framework of the agreement between the two parties had been reached by 21st April, 1901. It was understood that the Mission would hand over all assets and endowments, and that the Church in turn, would fully take over the work of the Mission in East Africa. When these steps were taken and the changes effected, the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) took over from the East Africa Scottish Mission (EASM) in 1901.¹¹

¹¹ (Mrs.) Henry E. Scott, p. 60. Although the handing over was agreed upon in 1901, the process was not actually completed until 1907.

IDEAS OF SALVATION

Tokunboh Adeyemo

The book by Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Salvation in African Tradition*, was first published by Evangel Publishing House in 1979 and has been widely read in theological circles throughout Africa. In a recently revised edition in 1997 under the same title and also published by Evangel Publishing House, several additional chapters have been added. "Ideas of Salvation" is one additional chapter. In this chapter Dr. Adeyemo outlines the various approaches to salvation found in world religions, including African Traditional Religion and the Christian faith.

For three years and travelling over 150,000 miles, Ronald Eyre, the famous BBC Television producer, engaged on what became popularly known as 'The Long Search'. The Long Search which took Eyre and his team to, among other places, India, Israel, Sri Lanka, Rome, Japan, Egypt, South Africa, and the United States of America, is about man's religious quest, or as later styled, man's quest for meaning. Of this adventure was produced a thirteen-part worldwide film series aired on BBC Television and a book entitled *The Long Search*. On the areas covered, both the series and the book are informative, clarificatory and authoritative. At the end of this marathon, the author came to a two-fold conclusion: (1) 'that all the Great Religions attack the same thing, though they seem to go about it in a medley of ways', and (2) that beyond the external religious paraphernalia there is a desire for wholeness.¹ With this note of caution born out of a disciplined research we approach our subject in this chapter.

Two approaches are open to us. We can consider the subject religion by religion such as idea of Salvation in Hinduism, in Buddhism, in Islam and so on.

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¹ Ronald Eyre, *On the Long Search*, (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1979), pp. 275-280.

Apart from the fact that time will not allow any adequate treatment of each system, salvation features cross and overlap in the different systems. Therefore, we have opted for classification approach² which largely follows the flow of history of religion and its repeated pattern.

Salvation by Right Ritual

Going back to the genesis of recorded religion known to us, evidences point in the direction that man did not invent, evolve or discover religion. Rather, from the day of his creation he recognised the Creator-God and had fellowship and communion with Him. And when that fellowship and communion was broken as a result of his (man's) sin, he sought re-entry and acceptance by means of animal sacrifice.

Genesis 4:4-5 has been variously interpreted by theologians particularly in light of Hebrews 11:4. Taken in its immediate context the message of Genesis 4 is clear. Abel's faith was authenticated by his obedience of offering animal sacrifice to God which corresponded to what God had done for Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3:21.

After he and his family had been spared in the great universal flood, we read in Genesis 8:20-21 that Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasant aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done'. This practice of building an altar and sacrificing animals to God was neither unknown nor uncommon to the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Gen. 12:7,8; 13:4, 18; 22:9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7). The idea was so familiar that, as a lad, Isaac asked his father: 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' (Gen. 22:7). The ritual of animal sacrifice, either to seek God's pleasure as in the case of Abel or in obedience to direct command from God with consequent blessing as in Abraham's case, has served as a means of salvation.

From the original pattern laid down by God copies were made by men. And as man drifted away from God, void of any direct communication from God, no prophets and no written scriptures, his religion fell from a lesser degree of degeneration to a greater one even as his mind became futile and his heart

² The Classification Approach is used by Robert Brow in his contribution, 'Origins of Religion', in A Lion Handbook on *The World's Religions* (England: Lion Publishing, 1982), p. 48.

became darkened. Corollary to this was the foolishness of exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles (see Romans 1:21-22). At the time when the worship of Creator-God had degenerated to the worship of many man-made gods and as people lived in some form of settled conditions, priestcraft became a trade. Its essence is the rise of a group or groups of people who claim to control access to God or gods and who suggest that the offering of sacrifices is a meritorious act which forces God or gods to grant favours. Robert Brow states the general conclusion of modern anthropologists in saying that:

The tribes have a memory of a 'high god', a benign creator-father-god, who is no longer worshipped because he is not feared. Instead of offering sacrifice to him, they concern themselves with the pressing problems of how to appease the vicious spirits of the jungle. The threats of the medicine man are more strident than the still, small voice of the father-god (Robert Brow).³

It can be said that this is where African Traditional Religion is at with its idea of salvation as already discussed above. It is ritualistic and utilitarian. Dr. O. Imasogie has come to the same conclusion in his most recent book.⁴

If salvation by right ritual is accepted as the oldest idea of salvation it is only expected that ritualistic practice shall be the norm in Hinduism which is the oldest of the living religions. With no founder, no central authority, and no fixed creed, the 563 million Hindus⁵ who live mainly in India adhere to *Karma-marga* (the Way of Works) for salvation. This is a system of consistent obedience in carrying out ceremonies, sacrifices and pilgrimages to accumulate merit. The Brahmin priesthood in India became hereditary and by 700 B.C. it exercised great power. Brow writes;

The Brahmins were in charge of all sacrificial duties for which they were paid fees by the people. They were now suggesting that by the right sacrifices, which they alone could offer, they could procure the favours of the gods, various temporal blessings, and a good place in heaven. Gods, men, governments, all were under priestly control.⁶

³ *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁴ O. Imasogie, *African Traditional Religion*, (Ibadan: University Press Ltd., 1982), pp. 76ff.

⁵ See 'Hidden Peoples 1980' chart issued by Marc, a research arm of World Vision International.

⁶ Robert Brow, p.38.

In passing it can be noted that whenever the priesthood assumes and exercises absolute control over people's conscience and destiny as in Hinduism of 700 B.C. or Roman Catholicism of the middle ages, religious revolt is what follows. So it was during the sixth-century B.C. Seven world religions appeared within fifty years of each other and all have continued to this day. These are: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Vedanta Monism and Taoism.

Salvation by Humanism

The priests became an intolerable burden to people. Morality was divorced from religion. People were denied their right. Truth and justice disappeared all in the name of religion. Since it appeared that the gods were allies of the priests, people began to reject the god-idea as they rejected the priest. In India for example, some of the warrior caste became atheists (charvakas). Having rejected God and gods, some of this Kshatriya caste turned away from Hinduism and started looking to man for salvation. 'Since the only good that man knows is happiness', they reason, 'then the highest good (i.e. salvation) was to do what made one truly happy'.

Two centuries later the Epicureans, disciples of a Greek philosopher, Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) gave the idea a philosophic stance by adding a little logic and an extensive system of physics. They argued:

Since pain is evil and since religion causes the greatest crimes and worst pains, especially the fear of divine punishment in a life after death, one's first principle must be that nothing ever comes from nothing by divine power. The universe is a collection of atoms and all phenomena are explained by their bumping each other (Gordon H. Clark).⁷

The Epicureans explained the world mechanically in order to prove that the gods have nothing to do with it. Salvation is the pursuit of pleasure which is sought through experience. "More to an Epicurean's taste were good meals, dozing in the sun, while avoiding politics and family life" (ibid).⁸ This doctrine of salvation became a seed for modern theology of existentialism and atheistic movements though with modifications. When Karl Marx, the father of Communism was asked what his objective in life was, he said: 'To dethrone God

⁷ Gordon H. Clark, 'Greek Ethics', *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Canon Press, 1973), p. 277.

⁸ Ibid, Apostle Paul was confronted while at Athens by certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17:16ff).

and destroy capitalism' (William S. McBirnie).⁹ The late Dr. Tai Solarin, a renowned Nigerian educator and writer categorically denounced the existence of God and sought salvation in man and hard work. In his book, *A Message for Young Nigerians*, he says:

God, to people of sort, is a soporific phantom, tossed round by people who have nothing to do, but proffering the belief in God to tantalize the working hours of such other millions of people who, too, have nothing to do. I am a humanist. Man is the noblest of all living things. I live to serve him totally, particularly the human child, and die in his service (Tai Solarin).¹⁰

These two contemporary examples are cited to indicate that the idea of man seeking salvation from within himself is neither recent nor dead. In fact it is on the increase among our disillusioned intellectuals. Some call it 'political salvation', or 'scientific socialism' and the like.

Salvation by Asceticism

Siddhartha Gautama, who later became known as Buddha upon founding Buddhism, was a prince of the second or warrior caste in India. Tradition has it that at the age of 29 he was shocked into seeking the meaning of life, the answer to the problem of sin and suffering by the sight of a leper, an old man and a corpse. Initially a Hindu, he rejected the priesthood, the gods and sacrifices as a solution. He tried unsuccessfully the way of philosophical speculation before undertaking the path of extreme bodily asceticism. That also didn't work. At 35, while seated under the bo tree in meditation, he experienced enlightenment and thus became the Buddha, 'the enlightened one'.

His interpretation of life and meaning was simple and down to earth. Owing to the law of *Karma*, or cause and effect, mankind is in bondage, and through rebirth or reincarnation all human beings reap good or evil consequences of their actions. Through enlightenment and obedience to the right conditions it is possible to liberate man from *Karma* and lead him to salvation, that is *nirvana*. Buddha promulgated the Four Noble Truths and the Noble eightfold path to freedom.

⁹ William Stuart McBirnie, *Karl Marx*, (Glendale: Voice of Americanism, n.d.), p. 3.

¹⁰ Tai Solarin, *A Message for Young Nigerians* (Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Pub. Ltd., 1981), p. 91.

The Four Noble Truths

1. The first truth is the knowledge of suffering. It states that all individual existence is miserable and painful – birth, ageing, illness, worry, pain, despair, distress.
2. The second truth is that the cause of all suffering and unhappiness is desire and ignorance – the desire to be, to have, to indulge oneself in lust and power, etc.
3. The third is that suffering can be destroyed by suppressing desire. The central aim of Buddhism is to give eternal release from suffering. This means freedom from the endless cycle of rebirth and entering the blessed state of *nirvana*.
4. The fourth truth indicates that the way to the third (i.e. removal of suffering), and this is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path:

The Eightfold Path

1. Right knowledge or understanding which refers to the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right attitude or intention – a mental attitude of goodwill, peaceableness, keeping away from sensual desire, hate and malice.
3. Right speech – wise, truthful and reconciliatory. No lying, useless chatter and gossip.
4. Right action – embracing all moral behaviour. No murder, stealing and adultery.
5. Right occupation – no exploitation.
6. Right effort or self-discipline. Evil impulses must be prevented and good ones fostered.
7. Right mindfulness or awareness or self-mastery, not giving in to the dictates of desire in thought, speech, action and emotion.
8. Right composure is achieved by intense concentration which frees the holy man from all that holds him back in his quest.

The Eightfold Path can be condensed into three: morality (right speech, action, occupation); spirituality (right effort, mindfulness, composure); and insight (right knowledge and attitude). There is no doctrine of a personal God. All that is wrong lies with man and man has the solution.

Monasticism, though distinct at different points, shares in this fundamental principle of attaining salvation by losing all desires.

Salvation by Moralism

The main distinction between a humanist, who sees salvation in doing what brings happiness and a moralist, who conceives of salvation in right

actions, is that the moralist allows the possibility of the existence of God though he also doesn't seek salvation from God or gods.

The earliest religious expression of the idea of salvation by morality purely by personal effort was also in India. It was started by Vardhamana, a contemporary of Buddha (599-527 B.C.), who later became Mahavira (great hero) or Jain (the Victor) following his enlightenment. He was from the second caste. Like Buddha, he reacted against the priesthood, the sacrifices and even God. He rejected prayer and worship as unnecessary. His thought was that good is always rewarded and evil punished. Therefore. Salvation could be attained not only by destroying the evil but by doing good. His religion became known as Jainism.

He taught that no injury should be done to any animal life. This gave birth to vegetarianism. His goal of salvation is the highest heaven where the soul dwells in eternal and conscious individuality.

If the respect for animal life is omitted from Jainism, one will discover that Jainism is similar to what Zoroaster in Persia had preached before, and what Confucius was preaching in China at the time of Mahavira in India (551-479 B.C.). The three were first and foremost preachers of ethics.

And down through the ages the world has known moralists or ethicists who believe that salvation is possible just by doing what is right and good quite apart from any doctrine of God. In this class we can include 'Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the Stoics of Greece, the high-principled Chinese, Roman and English 'gentlemen', the modern humanist and many liberal Jews' (Robert Brow).¹¹

Salvation by Mysticism

This idea originally emerged from Hinduism in an attempt partly to give philosophical stance to the ancient priesthood and partly to arrest those systems which have broken away from it. The teaching advocates that there is only one ultimate substance or principle or Reality called Brahma. Union with that Reality is salvation. And this can be achieved through philosophical speculation and meditation known as Yoga. Yoga is a Sanskrit word for 'yoke' a union of oneself with Brahma, the ultimate Reality, to the point of oneness. Yoga is a mystic and ascetic discipline by which one seeks to achieve liberation (*i.e.* salvation) of the self and union with the supreme spirit or universal soul through

¹¹ Robert Brow, p. 44.

intense concentration, deep meditation, and practices involving prescribed postures and controlled breathing. (Webster Dictionary).¹²

In this religious system called Monism (which is reformed Hinduism, gods, priests, and sacrifices are not banished as in Buddhism. Rather the sacrifices are spiritualised and God is given a new meaning. He is no longer a theistic Creator but a pantheistic absolute or what Tillich called 'the ground of all being'.

Monism has taken different forms in different places and at different times. In China, a Chinese teacher Lao-Tse, (604-517 B.C.), a contemporary of Confucius, taught and strongly advocated a return to the simplicity of nature, a quiet and personal search for the *Tao*, the eternal, impersonal mystical supreme principle that lies behind the universe. Instead of a stress on meditation it was more a seeking to be natural (in dress, food, ways of life), or at one with the course of nature. From this thought Taoism, one of the three recognised official religions of pre-Communist China evolved.

In our day many sects like Christian Science, Unity Church and cults like Hare Krishna, Zen guru Transcendental Meditation have their roots in Monism and share its idea of salvation.

Salvation by Submission

The idea of salvation by submission can also be described as salvation by strict adherence to law or salvation by faith and works. In this system, which is found in theistic religions, salvation takes a form of cooperation between God and man.

Judaism is the oldest form of salvation by keeping the law in sincerity. The commandments of the written law which have been expanded to 613 precepts, of which 365 are negative, stipulate what to do to obtain blessings from God and things to avoid curses. Practice of the law is more important than belief. Salvation in Judaism is primarily social and corporate and includes every aspect of life. It pertains to material prosperity, justice and continued historical existence of the people of Israel more than anything else.

Islam, which means 'peace', has much in common with Judaism more than is often realised. A muslim is one who submits to the will of the one and only God called Allah. For salvation, which is interpreted largely in material terms, Islam demands *Iman*, that is belief in the articles of faith; and *Din*, which

¹² Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition, 'Yoga', p. 1649.

is the practice of religious duties or the five pillars of faith. When a muslim complies with this demand he can legitimately expect rewards from God.

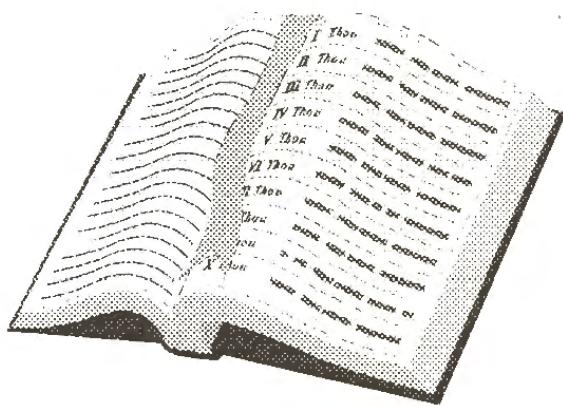
Essentially, the Roman Catholic theology of salvation fits into this category. While it is held that the atonement of Jesus Christ is efficient for salvation, it is not sufficient. Therefore, the faithful has to make penance, confession, seek absolution and purchase indulgences. This was the interpretation of the *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* formula, meaning that outside the Church there is no salvation. Even with new theological interpretation being given to this formula since Vatican II the notion of salvation by cooperation still persists.

Salvation by Grace

As demonstrated above, the world to which Jesus Christ came was rich in religions, in philosophical ideas, in rules and regulations and in humanistic efforts to give meaning to existence. But Jesus did not come to offer a religion, an idea, a law or a formula about reality. Rather, by His coming, He put an end to rituals and religions. He fulfilled the law in Himself. He unveiled the personal Creator-God. He offered life. By a life of sinless obedience He manifested the highest degree of morality and ethics. By His acts of mercy and compassion He demonstrated the love of God. His teaching about what is right, good and just has never been paralleled. He met the quest of philosophers concerning reality and truth. He lifted the poor; released the oppressed; healed the broken-hearted; set the captives free; fed the hungry; raised the dead; opened blind eyes; and proclaimed the good news of God's Kingdom. Above all, He suffered and died on the cross in the place of all sinners – not for any crime He had committed but to pacify the wrath of God. He died so as to reconcile man to God! He rose again so that justified man may be able to live by the power that raised Christ from the dead.

This is salvation in the New Testament. It is a restoration of that original relationship, fellowship and communion with the living personal Creator-Father God. It is wholistic: body, mind, soul and spirit. It is both vertical and horizontal. The one who is reconciled with God is sent to his world, to his neighbour and to his community to live out a righteous, holy and just life in the power of the Holy Spirit. All of this is by God's grace, totally unmerited, unearnable and undeserved. Christ has finished it; all that man does is believe – and even faith is a gift from God. Salvation by grace is not man trying to reach God but God reaching down and out to man. It is full and free. This salvation is both for time and eternity: now and in the *eschaton*.

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