

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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

Does History Matter?

An AJET Editorial

To answer this question, history matters a lot for it helps us understand our contemporary situation. It has been said that no present day events can be detached from their past. Hence we can emphasize that history is vital for assessing the heritage of the present day developments, be it in church, education, beliefs and worldviews. History helps us understand contemporary life in terms of origins, reasons for actions and methodologies for it stimulates action, enabling people to set directions for the course of future events. The articles in this journal focus mainly on past beginnings.

In the first article, Richard J. Gehman observes that the first six years of Africa Inland Mission marked a pioneer stage of her history with real hardship and uncertainty. Despite many problems, the Mission experienced gradual change as the years went by because the Lord raised influential Missionary pioneers who gave themselves wholeheartedly to the work of the Mission. These first pioneer missionaries were involved in itinerant evangelism/outreach ministries, evangelism through schooling and medicine, language learning, and Bible translation. Mission station strategy became a vital means of establishing the church. The vision of the early Missionaries was to train the Africans in order to embrace the work as their own. This strategy would allow for a quick spread of the gospel.

However, between 1920 and 1945 the Mission entered a period of ambivalence toward education. It had no vision for higher education. Unlike other denominational Missionaries who received seminary theological training, those in the AIM sending homes believed that education was not a priority in preparing one to be a Missionary in Africa; more so for the African people.

In the second article Watson A. Omulokoli points out that, early missionaries in Kenya “realized and envisioned the need for working out strategies towards cooperation and unity in their mission endeavours.” Firstly, the missionaries “recognized and wanted to demonstrate their common allegiance to Jesus Christ. Secondly, they were aware of their shared objective of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the supreme aim

in their respective groups. Thirdly, they wanted to minimize competitive conflicts especially in their spheres of operation.

At their conferences they discussed educational matters, indigenous churches, and customs of the indigenous people. However, Omulokoli notes that the 1911 Conference ended in deadlock because of traditions of the sending mother Missions or Societies that preferred a cautious approach, especially when it came to full-fledged union.

Benno van de Toren, in the third article, envisages a systematic exploration of the way in which the concepts of God (or the lack of such a concept) in Africa's prevalent worldviews determine their respective conception and practice of human authority. He argues that a Christian understanding and practice of authority should distinguish itself from the perspective of African Traditional Religion, in which the practice of authority suffers from its sacralisation of human authorities. It should also distinguish itself from (post)modern influences, which miss a transcendent moral basis for a critique of human authorities. Lastly, it should distinguish itself from Islamic concepts of authority, which are based on the dominant metaphor of God as King of the Universe and Master. In looking for an answer to Africa's crisis of authorities, Christians should instead be guided by a proper understanding of the Triune God, who revealed Himself in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the fourth article Esther J. Kibor examines, in an interview form, the theories, contributions and influence of Friedrich Froebel upon education in the 19th and 20th century. The gist of the article is that many of the principles found in education are sometimes practiced blindly without knowing their origin. Nonetheless, the article points out that much can be accomplished from harsh circumstances.

On discussing the attitude of the historical churches to poverty and wealth, James Ndyabahika, in the last article, notes, "the economic growth does not eliminate poverty." Inequality between "rich" and "poor" will continue to grow. He observes that a big fraction in the church are very poor while the "rich promote the Jesuit philosophy; the *end justifies the means*." To him, "wealth acquisition, which does not take care of the needy, the marginalized and the poorest of the poor, is brutal and inhumane."

THE AFRICA INLAND MISSION: ASPECTS OF ITS EARLY HISTORY

Richard J. Gehman*

MISSIONS IN KENYA PRIOR TO 1895

Portuguese Roman Catholics

Christianity first came to the Kenyan coast through the Portuguese Roman Catholics. Beginning in 1498 when Vasco da Gama dropped anchor at Malindi, the Portuguese made sporadic visits to the Kenyan coast, attempting many times to Christianize the coastal peoples. By 1890 the only remnants of these efforts were some 50 Goan Roman Catholics and the ruins of the historic Fort Jesus in the city of Mombasa.¹

Anglican Church Missionary Society

During the modern missionary era the first pioneer missionary to Kenya was Johann Ludwig Krapf who arrived in Mombasa in May 1844. He was a German in the service of the Anglican Church Missionary Society. Krapf's vision was to reach the Galla people living in Ethiopia, numbering some eight million, whom Krapf hoped would be the key to the reaching of the rest of East Africa. Since he was expelled by the Roman Catholics from Ethiopia, into which he first entered in 1837, he hoped to reach the Galla people from Kenya's side.

Soon after Krapf settled on the north mainland of Kenya, opposite Mombasa, his wife and new born child died. Krapf himself became incapacitated by malaria. But this intrepid pioneer wrote home to his supporting church: "As the victories of the Church are gained by stepping over the graves of her members, you may be more convinced that the hour is at hand when you are summoned to the conversion of Africa from its eastern shore."²

Krapf soon discovered that the peoples among whom he had settled, the Mijikenda (also called the Wanyika), were resistant to the Christian gospel,

* Dr. Richard J. Gehman was an AIM missionary in Africa for over thirty years. While he served in various capacities, most of these years he taught at Scott Theological College, where he has been until his retirement in 2002. Dr. Gehman earned his Doctor of Missiology degree from Fuller Theological Seminary, USA.

even though he had succeeded in translating parts of the New Testament into Kiswahili. The climate was also unhealthy. Some Akamba, who had migrated from their country because of famine and had settled near Rabai, told him of their homeland in the highlands.

Krapf wrote in his journal: "From the first establishment of our missionary station at Rabbai Mpia it had been our wish to visit in the interior those Wakamba tribes who, traversing as they do for trading purposes a large section of E. Africa, may well claim the most serious attention of a missionary."³

Several safaris were made into the interior, probing and investigating the possibility of reaching the Galla. On his first missionary journey to Ukambani in November 1849, a small band of Akamba joined him. Traveling into the interior was a dangerous enterprise, crossing two hundred miles of waterless wasteland and ever threatened by Masai warriors and marauders who attacked the caravans.

During his first years in Mombasa, Krapf began dreaming of a chain of mission stations from the east coast of Africa to West Africa. He calculated that if one mission station were established at intervals of three-hundred miles, it would take nine such stations with a total of thirty-six missionaries, four at each station. This he thought could be accomplished in four to five years.⁴

This vision of a chain of mission stations fashioned his thinking throughout his explorations. His second missionary journey into Ukambani was made in July 1850 with the decision by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to found a mission station about 330 miles from Rabai on high ground of the Yatta Plateau, 'and thus actually commence the chain of missions through Africa formerly spoken of.'⁵

But this safari ended in tragedy. A band of robbers attacked his caravan and his Mukamba friend who accompanied him, Chief Kivoi, was killed. Krapf fled into the bush, hiding from the marauders by day and seeking shelter from the wild beasts at night. Wandering without water for days, Krapf finally came to the Tana River.

The Akamba had thought Krapf was a sorcerer because of his English New Testament which he read frequently, and because of his paper, pencil and telescope. Because Krapf had not prevented the murder of Kivoi, the Akamba became suspicious of him. Fearing for his life among those 'capricious and uncertain Wakamba', Krapf felt it best to return to the coast without accomplishing his mission.

With pain in his heart, Krapf recommended to the CMS that they 'put off the Mission to Ukambani for three or four years more, and first possess a nearer station'.⁶ Yearning for the Akamba, Krapf wrote:

No doubt, a journey to Ukambani and still more a residence in it, would involve painful and trying self-denial on the part of a missionary; but let us bear in mind the great daring of the Wakamba, and the dangers to which they expose themselves on their journeys and hunting expeditions, merely for the sake of earthly gain. Shall their love of lucre be allowed to put to shame the zeal of a missionary who has the highest of all objects at heart – the greatest of all gain – the regeneration of the heathen.⁷

After the death of his co-labourers he wrote home to his supporters:

And yet I keep to my course. Africa must be conquered by Missions: a chain of Missions must be effected between the east and west though a thousand warriors should fall to the left, and ten thousand to the right...The idea of a chain of missions between East and West Africa will yet be taken up in succeeding generations carried out; for the idea is always conceived ten years before the deed comes to pass. This idea I bequeath to every Missionary coming to East Africa.⁸

Indeed, it was this vision of a chain of mission stations, built upon faith and an exploratory knowledge of the eastern fringe of Kenya, that Krapf bequeathed to the Church of Jesus Christ. Two missionary settlements for freed slaves, Rabai and Freretown, had been established by the C.M.S. near Mombasa. The task of evangelism began in this way of converting the slaves who ran away from their Arab masters. By 1880 there were 430 residents at Freretown and 250 at Rabai. But the primary contribution which Krapf made to the evangelization of Kenya was the vision he placed before the church constituency back in Britain and continental Europe. His ministry and experiences, printed in the book, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours in East Africa*, exercised a great influence abroad. Included in that vision was explicit reference to the Akamba. He regarded the Akamba 'as an important element in the relation to the future missionary designs in Eastern Africa'.⁹

In the mean time, the colonizing process was underway. In May 1886 William Mackinnon received from the Sultan of Zanzibar for his Association which later became the Imperial British East Africa Company, the authority to administer the territory between the Uмба and Tana rivers. A year later there was an Anglo-German agreement granting a 'British sphere of influence' up to the shores of Lake Victoria, though excluding the coastal strip, ten miles wide, which remained the possession of the Sultan of Zanzibar. Treaties were made with the Nyika, Taita and Akamba and

preparations were made for 'effective occupation' of the interior.

The British trading company saw little prosperity flowing from the Taru desert or the scanty population in most of Kenya. Instead, they looked westward to Uganda, 'the pearl of Africa'. To reach this distant point they conceived the idea of a railroad stretching from Mombasa to Uganda. But the Company faced many problems in their attempt to fulfill their dreams.

Due to their financial difficulties, the British Government took control of the administration of the territory July 1, 1895, calling the possession, the British East Africa Protectorate. No doubt a major reason for Britain's agreement was the scramble for Africa, the fear that the French or Germans would fill in the vacuum left by the trading Company, if Britain did not.

Other Missions

For fifty years after Krapf first arrived in Mombasa in 1844, Christian missionary work was concentrated at the coast. In response to Krapf's influential book, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, the British United Methodists entered Kenya in 1862. Though their vision was likewise to reach the Galla, they were unable to penetrate the interior and experienced many disasters. After the first year only one Methodist missionary was still alive. A Holy Ghost priest of the Roman Catholic Church in 1879 first founded a station on the Tana river, but within one year moved back to Mombasa. In 1893 the Bavaria Evangelical Lutheran Mission opened up stations in Ukambani. Independent missionary, Stuart Watt, with his wife and family, walked up from the Coast to Ukambani in 1893 and settled at Ngelani, near Machakos.¹⁰

FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE A.I.M.

Peter Cameron Scott

Missionary preparation: It was during this period that God was preparing a young man by the name of Peter Cameron Scott to provide the vision and leadership for the Africa Inland Mission.

Scott was born near Glasgow, Scotland, on March 7, 1867. When he was twelve years old, Peter and his family immigrated to Philadelphia in the United States of America. During his teen age years he experienced an inner struggle. On the one hand, his musical talent attracted him to the concert stage where he was invited to sing professionally. On the other hand, his parents refused him permission because of Christian convictions. Through this spiritual struggle over the question of a musical career, Peter Cameron Scott eventually made a complete dedication of himself to God.¹¹

In November 1890 Peter sailed to the Congo where he and his brother, John, served with the International Missionary Alliance for two years. During that time he buried John and he himself became deathly sick from malaria, necessitating his return. He was 'carried out of the country...unconscious'.¹²

Vision for the A.I.M.: During his recovery he visited England and while there made a pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey.

Kneeling beside the tomb of David Livingston in Westminster Abbey, he was gripped by the inscription, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring.' In that moment his plans for East Africa became crystallized. Previous study on his part had led to the conclusion that there was a thickly populated region in what was then British East Africa which was largely unreached with the Christian message. In that moment by Livingston's tomb Scott envisioned a chain of mission stations stretching westward from Mombasa on the east coast to Lake Chad in the heart of Africa. The Africa Inland Mission was thus conceived.¹³

Whether this vision of a chain of mission stations came independently or whether he was influenced by the reading of Krapf's book, no one can say. We do know that Alexander Mackay in 1889, a great missionary pioneer in Uganda with the Church Missionary Society, also referred to a chain of stations.¹⁴ But the fact remains that the Africa Inland Mission was born with the passion to reach *inland*, planting mission stations through the heart of Africa. It is no wonder, then, that the A.I.M. jumped over the first 250 miles of Kenya's coastal area, and began planting churches in the interior. Not until seventy years later did the A.I.M. turn back to the Kenyan coast to evangelize there.

Formation of the A.I.M.: When Peter Scott returned to Philadelphia, he expressed his missionary calling to several interested friends who formed themselves into the Philadelphia Missionary Council on May 6, 1895, an interdenominational group seeking to assist in world evangelization. "Its function was to spread the knowledge of mission work and to forward means and workers to different fields as God supplied them in answer to prayer. None of the members of the Council were to draw any salary so that the home work of the Mission was to be carried on without expense to the mission concerned."¹⁵

With the encouragement of Dr. A.T. Pierson, Scott recruited a band of six other missionary candidates to accompany him to Kenya. Prior to his departure, Rev. A.B. Simpson conducted the service of ordination, committing Scott to the ministry. A farewell was given to the first A.I.M.

missionaries at the Pennsylvania Bible Institute, closely associated with the A.I.M. in the early years and founded about the same time as the A.I.M. and the Philadelphia Missionary Council. In 1895 the Institute was dedicated as the Headquarters for the Africa Inland Mission.¹⁶ The Philadelphia Missionary Council had no organic relationship to the A.I.M., but only served as an agency of 'forwarding to the field workers and means as God might furnish them'.¹⁷

The aim of the Africa Inland Mission was narrowly conceived, namely, evangelism and church planting. The purpose of the Mission was not '...to supplant existing organizations, but to join heart and hand with them in a work of such stupendous difficulty,' namely, 'evangelizing the darkest spot in Africa's continent of darkness'.¹⁸ As we shall see later, this vision of evangelism and establishing a chain of mission stations across Africa had a determinative effect on the ministry of the A.I.M.

Voyage to Kenya: On August 17, 1895 Peter Cameron Scott and the first part of the A.I.M. missionaries left New York harbour for Mombasa. Prior to sailing, the missionaries chose officers from among themselves, for the Philadelphia Missionary Council believed the men and women on the field would know better how to meet emergencies and how to plan than those living in the homeland. "So the mission was made a field mission, self-regulating, self-perpetuating, responsible to God alone, for its work and having no organic unity with any board at home."¹⁹

Their ship reached Mombasa in October, two months later. Though warmly welcomed by the Anglican missionaries, they discovered alarm 'as the Masai seemed to be roaming over a large section of the country, murdering and thieving wherever they went'.²⁰

Safari into the interior: Because of the dangerous trip inland from Mombasa, the women were compelled to remain behind while Scott and his four fellow male missionaries, accompanied by a caravan of 300 men and 42 camels, trekked inland to Nzau peak, 'The Gateway to East Africa'. Traveling across the grassy plains, filled with herds of wild animals, the Nzau peak juts out with commanding majesty, announcing the beginnings of the Eastern Highlands. At 4,000 feet this location among the Akamba appeared to promise better health for the missionaries. Captain Lugard called Nzau (or Nzawi), 'The massive granite sentinel that guards the gate to the heart of Africa'.²¹ The trip from Mombasa to Nzau took one month on foot, arriving at Nzau on December 12, 1895. Having planted the first A.I.M. station at Nzau, Scott wrote home: "Now the first stepping stone has been laid inside the gate."²²

Establishing the first A.I.M. stations: During the following year, Peter Cameron Scott walked 2,600 miles: he established three more A.I.M. stations in Ukambani at Kikai, Kilungu and Kangundo, and welcomed a second missionary party of eight, including his parents and younger sister.

Hotchkiss was posted at Sakai on March 18, 1896, Krieger at Kilungu on April 18 and Severen at Kangundo on October 10, 1896, the latter station being rented for \$1.50 annually from the British government which had erected a building to house soldiers who were used to suppress a rebellion among the Akamba. Within ten months four stations were established, six buildings erected made of brick and six other 'good grass dwelling houses'.

In Scott's First Annual Report to the Philadelphia Missionary Council, he made these observations of the Akamba:

My heart is filled with wonder, love and praise, as I sit down and review the past year of our labours in this land, to which God, by His grace, hath called us. We went out 'not knowing', but our God led us forth by a 'right way', and brought us to a 'city of habitation'.

And now a word might be said about the people. The Wakamba occupy the territory known as Ukamba, which extends from Tsaro River [meaning Tsavo River], to Kikuyu. The population is estimated to be between four and five hundred thousand. The men (and a great many of them) are naked, with the exception of the brass wire, which is freely worn about their necks, arms, waists and legs. They also make very fine chains out of fine brass wire, and great bunches of these are worn in the ears. They are generally well built fellows, tall, thin, but muscular. As a rule, they have straight-cut features, are high in the forehead, and rather intelligent in appearance.

The custom of women is rather picturesque. In front they wear a small apron of cloth, or goat skin, about five inches long by seven in breadth. Behind they wear a long V-shaped piece of hide, which reaches to the knees, being split up the centre; they also wear an oval hide fastened over the shoulder reaching to the hips. The women do not wear so much brass wire but the quantity of beads some of them carry around their waists and necks is really wonderful. They are an agricultural people, possessing large herds of cattle and goats. Their manner of cultivation is decidedly crude, as their only implement is a long stick sharpened at the end, with which they turn over the soil, clear the ground, and plant the seed. It is remarkable how much ground they can dig up in a day with one of these sticks. Some few have short-handled hoes, but these are not native. Their tool chest is made up of a very few things and not hard to carry around: a small axe with blade from one-and-a-half to two inches broad, and handle

two feet long; then comes a small axe, blade one inch long and handle two feet long; a pair of pinchers and a knife. Their weapons of defense are chiefly the bow and arrow, and a long sword. Their houses are small conical grass huts, with a door so small that it is with difficulty you can crawl in when on all fours.²³

Near Extinction of A.I.M.

With a flare of dedication and enthusiasm the A.I.M. was launched. But the ensuing five years nearly destroyed the fledgling mission. The Akamba were not friendly toward the missionaries at first. In September 1896 Willis Hotchkiss wrote home from Sakai:

Opposition of the people was very bitter for the first few months, and I saw many trying experiences...Several times I was threatened with death if I did not leave 'at once'; they threatened to tear down my house, and finally as a last resort tried to starve me out by withholding all food supplies for nearly a month, but through it all His tender compassion failed not.²⁴

But this resistance was neither uniform nor continuous. In December that year F.W. Krieger reported from Nzaui that ten heads of family brought him large presents of beans, flour and milk. They also requested that they become his children and he would be their father to whom they could bring all their difficulties. "Consequently, someone comes every morning to enquire if I need anything, either men to help or food."²⁵

Death of Peter Cameron Scott and others: Contrary to former opinions, Nzaui along with the other stations proved to be unhealthy. Within a year after arrival, Peter Cameron Scott died of blackwater fever, going into the presence of the Lord on December 4, 1896. Two other missionaries died, some returned home and still others resigned. By May 1898 only Willis Hotchkiss remained. He writes of the trying circumstances he faced.

Between incessant bouts of fever and the hostility of the natives, I had an interesting time. Food was exceedingly scarce, and for the entire time of my residence there it was difficult, and at times impossible to buy anything from the people. For two months at one time I had nothing to eat but beans and sour milk, and there came a morning when there wasn't a bean left. Even such a common place item as salt was missing entirely for weeks at a time.²⁶

Writing to the Philadelphia Missionary Council after the death of Thomas Allen, Hotchkiss exclaimed:

I feel as though I were treading upon holy ground. I look out upon those two mounds of earth in plain sight, one made a year ago, the other fresh

heaped, and think of the other one away yonder beside Tsavo's torrent., only two months old, and do you wonder there comes as from the opened heavens a voice saying, 'Occupy till I come!' Brethren, God has laid Ukambani at our feet. At our hands he requires these other lost sheep. Shall we turn back? Shall we falter because the ranks are thinned? No, no; a thousand times no. Rather let us go on our faces before God and claim fresh labourers for the waiting harvest field. These sad events presage coming victory.²⁷

Famine and disease: Increasing the distress, a severe famine devastated Ukambani in 1898 and 1899 in which the population was decimated. Following the famine came a smallpox epidemic. Some estimate that half or even three-quarters of the Akamba died of starvation and disease. Writing while all alone from Kangundo in 1899 William Bangert lamented:

It is getting so awful that I really dread to leave the station, even for the plain. The drawn, agonized look on these faces plainly speak of the horrors of a death of starvation. The natives with few exceptions are existing entirely on a little root berry about the size of a pea, which they dig out of the sand, and grows under a kind of weed. Where there are to be found, you will daily see hundreds of the most pitiable specimens imaginable, poor, thin, bony men, women and children with mouths besmeared with dirt, squatting about digging out these roots and eating them as fast as found. Thus, they manage to keep body and soul together for a time, but eventually are obliged to give up the struggle and die. You will notice them growing thinner and thinner and finally miss them entirely, and you say to yourself, 'another soul passed into eternity.'²⁸

This lonely missionary sought to feed the hungry through funds coming from America. Many letters were written describing the desperate need of the dying in Ukambani 'with absolutely no prospect or possible way of getting food, save what comes from the well stocked storehouses of Christendom, for a long time to come'.²⁹

On one occasion he sent men to Machakos to purchase rice, but they found none available, meaning 'that the country is practically destitute of food'. To pay the men who went for the food, Bangert shot a rhino so they could have some food. Bangert wrote: "I have heard of famine and read of famine, but never had the remotest dream of the awfulness of famine – that word is laden with horrors so hastily that the pen refuses to describe them." By 1898 there were 1,100 Akamba being fed in the famine camp near Kangundo.

Because of the lonely harrowing experiences of Bangert, living all alone at Kangundo station during the famine, C.F. Johnston reported that when he arrived in Kenya, "I was almost frightened at his appearance; he looked so

pale and haggard.” Bangert wrote in November 1899:

Less than one fourth of the Wakamba tribe remains to tell the story of their awful suffering within the past year and a half, and before the crops come, a much smaller percentage will remain...About a score are dying daily out of the seventeen or eighteen hundred in the famine camp at Machakos, and just think of the twenty-four parentless, homeless children found dead together in a hut a Kiu a little south and jackals have not been able to dispose of them as before, so they die and rot by the wayside, and in places the stench is horrible.³⁰

In 1900 L.R. Severen presented the “Annual Report of the Field Superintendent” from Kangundo.³¹ He noted that added to the famine there had been a small pox ‘so that the country was near desolate’. Following the famine the A.I.M. began schools for the orphan children, C.F. Johnston conducting the one in Kangundo.

Much time was spent in building permanent dwellings and language learning. Considerable work had been done to reduce Kikamba to writing so that new missionaries could study Kikamba ‘without puzzling, as we have done, for days and weeks over some simple word with every possible chance that after getting some definition, will afterward find it incorrect’. Eight hymns had been translated into Kikamba. Commenting on the peoples, Severen observed: “The Wakamba are probably the most peaceable, susceptible to religious impressions and trustworthy of any of the tribes in East Africa, so can most easily be evangelized and trained to do gospel work.”³²

The observation of the older A.I.M. missionaries is that the hostility of the Akamba prior to the famine was transformed into friendliness after the famine, as they saw the love and kindness of the missionaries toward them in their distress. Suspicion was changed into confidence that these white missionaries were there to help them.

Signs of Progress

The first six years of the A.I.M. marked the pioneer stage of her history, with real hardship and uncertainty. By 1901 significant changes were taking place so that by hindsight we may say that after 1900 the A.I.M. was launched into an era of expansion and development.

The language was partially understood, though not mastered. More permanent buildings had been erected, so that Severen could write in 1901: “There is so little of hardship connected with the work, that it is difficult for one to realize that so much sickness and suffering obtained in the old pioneer days of the mission, when we were so often in very sore straits

for even the simplest necessities of life."³³

Charles Hurlburt: The Philadelphia Missionary Council originally had only been a service organization, to spread information about the work in Africa, approve candidates and channel funds for their support and work. The A.I.M. was organized on the field and governed from the field, with no organic relationship with the Council. But soon after Scott's death, the Philadelphia Missionary Council took direction of the work in Africa and eventually appointed Rev. Charles E. Hurlburt to be the Director. Hurlburt was the Chairman of the Philadelphia Missionary Council and the Founder and President of the Pennsylvania Bible Institute, now the Philadelphia University of Bible. In October 1898 Hurlburt first visited Africa. In October 1901 he and his family of five children sailed for Africa. He served as Director with distinction for twenty-five years.

Soon after Hurlburt reached Kenya, he moved the Headquarters of the A.I.M. from Kangundo to Kijabe among the Gikuyu, situated on the escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. Kangundo had been bypassed by the Uganda Railroad some 35 miles across the 'excessively hot Athi plains'. Feeling a need to be closer to telegraph and mail service, they relocated to a site next to the railroad and at an elevation of 7,200 feet, free from malaria.

Charles Hurlburt became a missionary statesman of great distinction who led the A.I.M. from near extinction at the turn of the century to a task force of 200 missionaries in East and Central Africa twenty-five years later. He became a close friend of the former President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, who 'considered Hurlburt to be the greatest man he had met in Africa'.³⁴

Influential missionary pioneers: During those formative years missionaries came to Kenya who together with their children played a significant part in the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ. In the same missionary party with Charles Hurlburt came Pastor Lee H. Downing and his wife, a close friend of Charles Hurlburt and former teacher in the Pennsylvania Bible Institute. He did much to carry on what the Director had begun, serving as Field Director and in many other capacities. His descendants to the fourth generation still serve with the A.I.M.

John Stauffacher arrived in Kenya in 1903. He was "a rare soul indeed – a real student, musician, an astronomer and a lover of homely wit. His masterpiece was the translation of the entire Bible into the Masai language and he worked among that tribe for the greater part of his life."³⁵ John Stauffacher shared with Charles Hurlburt much of the pioneering exploration in the early days. Stauffacher's descendants to the fourth

generation are continuing to serve in Africa.

C.F. Johnston had come earlier in 1898 and served with the A.I.M. for thirty-six years.³⁶ On May 2, 1902 Johnston established the A.I.M. station at Machakos and became well known for his itinerant ministry around the area, laying the foundation of the Africa Inland Church in Machakos. Today he is still affectionately known as 'Bwana Nthanzi' and a Secondary School in recent years has been named after him.

Albert Barnett landed in Mombasa in 1907. He together with his sons succeeding him, laboured among the Kalenjin at Eldama Ravine for so many years. The Barnetts are now remembered with a town having been named after them, known as 'Kabarnet.' His descendants to the fourth generation are still serving in Africa.

The A.I.M. has been known as a 'family mission'. This began in 1896 when Peter Cameron Scott was joined by his father, mother and sister, his older parents coming to work with him 'without any thought of ever returning to the mother country again'.³⁷ By 1970 there were 67 children of the A.I.M. workers serving as missionaries with the A.I.M.³⁸ John Stauffacher, Lee Downing, Albert Barnett and Earl Anderson not only had many of their sons and daughters return to Africa with the A.I.M., but have had the privilege of having many of their grandchildren, and now even their great grandchildren, serving in the continent as missionaries with the A.I.M.

Church growth: A few years after the famine, there was the first real breakthrough in evangelism. In 1902 an old chief from Kilungu walked 70 miles to Kangundo, requesting missionaries to come and tell them the words of God. He offered to give gardens, a goat and to help build a house. Hostility and suspicion had been transformed into eager interest in the work of the missionaries.³⁹

Shortly after Hurlburt moved the A.I.M. Headquarters from Kangundo to Kijabe, there was a tremendous response by the Gikuyu.

At the Sunday meeting twenty men and women beside Kikuvu, in all three times seven (note the two numbers) came forward from the company of people one at a time, and solemnly declared their belief in Jesus Christ and their determination with His help to abandon all known sin, to have nothing to do with making or drinking *tembo*, the greatest curse we have to fight here, to abandon all needless work on the Lord's Day, and to attend regularly all the religious services of the Mission. You would have to be here a year to understand what such a step meant to each individual...It is the first marked manifested fruit of the Mission in its history.⁴⁰

We conclude therefore, that the first six years of missionary work by the A.I.M were tenuous in nature, securing a foothold in Africa. They were confronted by many problems which threatened the very existence of the Mission. Very few conversions occurred. But a gradual change began to take place by the turn of the century.

ASPECTS OF THE MINISTRY OF THE A.I.M.

Evangelism

Object of A.I.M.: As we have seen previously, the sole purpose of the mission was evangelism. The first constitution of the A.I.M. stated, "The object shall be evangelization in Inland Africa, as God shall direct."⁴¹

There has always been a certain tension in the A.I.M. between the goal of evangelism and other accompanying activities which either complement the gospel or are the full expression of the gospel. Thus we find that initially the A.I.M. was confronted with famine. Their response was famine relief and schools for the orphans which God used initially for the conversion of the lost.

Hotchkiss, who was the last A.I.M. missionary remaining in 1897, later left the mission in 1899 and founded the Friends' African Industrial Mission at Kaimosi in Western Kenya. Perhaps he disagreed with other A.I.M missionaries who like Thomas Allen wrote, 'the effort to combine industrial with evangelistic work in the climate of Central Africa appears to be a mistake'.⁴² Perhaps Hotchkiss was more in agreement with David Livingston who stressed the need for civilizing by imparting to the Africans the fruits of Christianity.

Yet even Hotchkiss acknowledged the priority of evangelism in his own missionary work. Writing later, Hotchkiss comments:

Now before we reach our objective it may be as well to ask ourselves a few pertinent questions. Just why have we come on this enterprise? Is it merely to get the African to exchange his religion for ours, even though ours is admittedly better than his? Or is it to civilize him, to get him to wear clothes, to build better houses, to produce more and better crops? All these are desirable things, and they are things that have bulked large in my own service for Christ during these forty years. But they are not the things which justify missionary enterprise.

No, the thing goes deeper than that. Jesus indicated it when the paralyzed man was brought to him to be healed. He needed healing of the body and needed it badly, but he needed something else which was far more fundamental. 'Son, thy sins be forgiven thee' is the first word. **That word**

touches the need which lies back of, and is responsible for every other need. The sin question must be settled before we can cope with the multiplied problems of social and economic need.⁴³

Pressing to the 'regions beyond': Throughout the early years of the A.I.M. there was a deep seated yearning to expand and to preach Christ where He was not known. Until 1903 the A.I.M. was restricted to the Akamba people. Expansion proceeded that year to include the Gikuyu. Within another decade the stations were opened at Laikipia among the Masai, at Eldama Ravine among the Tugen, at Kapsabet among the Nandi, and by 1914 Nyakach was opened among the Luo above Lake Victoria.

One might describe the A.I.M. missionaries as having a 'wander-lust', an intense craving to go to the 'regions beyond' where Christ was not named. On August 2, 1911 John Stauffacher wrote a letter to Hurlburt, saying that he wanted to go to Lake Albert and begin a work there. If the A.I.M. denied him his request, Stauffacher replied, he would resign and go independently. This was discussed by the Council which then denied Stauffacher his request. Stauffacher concluded, that if any further extension work was undertaken in Ukamba, Kikuyu or Masailand, he would resign from the mission, for he was convinced that A.I.M. should be pressing beyond its present borders.⁴⁴

We see herein the tension between building up the work already established and moving on to new, unreached fields. The accounts of the lives of John Stauffacher⁴⁵ and Tom Collins⁴⁶ illustrate the pioneering, venturing spirit of numerous A.I.M. missionaries, yearning to penetrate the 'regions beyond'.

Charles Hurlburt, the Director of the A.I.M. for twenty-five formative years, contributed enormously to the spread and extension of the A.I.M. throughout East and Central Africa, and thereby fulfilling the vision of Peter Cameron Scott of a chain of missions across Africa.⁴⁷

In 1909 the A.I.M. was invited by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to occupy her former stations near Lake Victoria in German East Africa, now known as Tanzania. In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt, former President of the United States, interceded on behalf of his friend, Charles Hurlburt, in persuading the Belgian Government to permit the A.I.M. to establish stations in north-eastern Belgian Congo, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1918 the A.I.M. entered the West Nile District of Uganda with an agreement to work in cooperation with the C.M.S. in establishing the Anglican Church there. In 1924 the A.I.M. entered French Equatorial Africa, now known as the Central African

Republic. More recently the A.I.M. has entered the Sudan, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Madagascar and elsewhere.

Prayer for the lost: This primary spiritual concern is evidenced in the many prayer requests in the early days. From Mbooni in 1912 came this request: 'For native Christians that they may come to realize more of the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives so that they may have victory over sin; that God may definitely call and fit some of these Christians for evangelistic work, so that they shall be consumed with a desire to give the Gospel to their own peoples.' C.F. Johnston in his own handwriting, wrote: "Pray for all of us – missionary and native Christians – that we may have a real hatred for sin and a genuine love for the sinner."⁴⁸

Language learning: In order to evangelize, the A.I.M. placed top priority on language learning. The importance of acquiring communication skills can be demonstrated by the fact that the members of the Gikuyu language committee, which included the Kenya Field Director, Lee Downing, were 'reprimanded for neglecting their duties' when they had nothing to report concerning the preparing of missionaries for language examination. They were 'strongly urged' by the General Council to see that 'candidates be prepared for examination in May'.⁴⁹

Bible translation: Evangelism required Bible translation. In some areas progress was slow, due to the difficulty of reducing the language to writing. But by 1926 the New Testament was translated into Luo, Kikuyu, Kikamba and the whole Bible was translated into Nandi, the first East African language to have a complete Bible translation.⁵⁰

Itinerant evangelism: Besides the regular services held daily at the stations, and the lessons they had for the orphan children, the missionaries went out to the villages on itinerant work. But the initial response in Ukambani was slim. Bartholomew reported from Kangundo in 1903:

I am out nearly every day in the villages working, with seemingly few results; nevertheless, we toil on, feeling confident that in spite of all the darkness, God will gather out many 'jewels' for his own...A few have taken a definite stand but they are like new-born lambs in the midst of treacherous wolves and surely need your prayers. The village work is like personal work at home. I have always loved such work; it is mostly dealing with individuals.⁵¹

At first the missionaries tended to spread the Word of God far and wide. But they discovered that little impact was made. Instead, they began to concentrate on those few who believed or seemed responsive. Bartholomew observed:

I believe it to be far more profitable to devote nearly all my time to those who have confessed Christ and to those who seem to be anxious to know him...I believe it is far wiser to have only one man and develop that man, than to try to develop too many, and then not develop any. What I long to see is native Christians, or leaders, who shall have such a hunger for the Word and be so burdened with the lost condition of their fellowmen, that they cannot be content unless they proclaim the message of life to those who know it not.⁵²

Mission station strategy: With the need to teach line upon line, precept upon precept, in order to build a solid Christian after his conversion, and because of the strong pull of the family and clan, drawing the convert back into his traditional life style, the missionaries devoted their attention to the peoples living in close proximity of the station. This enabled the missionaries to help the converts during times of testing.

The Mission Station in fact became a vital means of establishing the Church of Jesus Christ in Africa.⁵³ Christians came to live on or near the station, employed by the Mission, taught and supervised by the missionaries. Most of the early converts were employees of the A.I.M. who lived on the station. The daily Bible studies and prayer meetings conducted by the early missionaries were intended for the believers on the station. Since the lives of those living on the station were under the authority of the missionary in charge, they were able to enforce ethical norms by the threat of ejection from the station. This would also mean the loss of his job. Thus the early Christians, fed and nourished on the Mission Station, 'were regarded by their kinsmen as outcasts'.⁵⁴

Bartholomew in Ukambani urged the Christians not to return to their people because of the temptation of drink in the villages. Some Christians declared they would not return to their villages.⁵⁵ Baeta thus calls the Mission Station 'a pocket of this new invading civilization', 'a gathered colony'.⁵⁶

Rev. Timothy Kendagor, however, believes that the mission approach in starting schools and establishing mission stations was appropriate, because the traditions were so strong, the community so tightly knit, that it was virtually impossible to penetrate with the gospel.⁵⁷ Thus we find that with all the accompanying problems associated with the Mission Compound, there may have been no other way for the initial penetration of the gospel among the African peoples.

Evangelism through schooling: As a matter of historical fact, the most successful avenue of evangelism was the school. The colonial government

did not sponsor many schools for the Africans, for they depended almost entirely on the missions. The church building, used on Sunday for divine worship, became the school building during week days. Christians were called 'readers', since it was primarily the Christians who learned how to read. "From the elementary schools came fully 95% of the early church members and the Deputy General Director wrote of the little chapel schools in 1924 as 'irreplaceable as a recruiting agency for the A.I.M.'"⁵⁸ Of the 3,000 local congregations of the Africa Inland Church in 1980, fully 1,000 grew out of the Primary Schools.⁵⁹ The teacher during the weekdays became the evangelist on Sunday.

In many ways the A.I.M. demonstrated a concern for more than the spiritual needs of the people. In 1906 Hurlburt spoke of the need of an industrial school, a need placed on his heart in 1898. Though he was at first critical of the idea, he became convinced of the need after observing the situation for seven years.

If it would be a crime to take helpless orphans at home and put them in a school, then be contented with holding evangelistic services, with never an effort to teach the children how to work nor to care for themselves, - much more is it a great wrong to take this child-people, who, unless we teach them some trade, must live in physical, mental and moral uncleanness of their home surroundings, and simply tell them the story of redemption without teaching them how to live.⁶⁰

For this purpose the colonial government granted 2,500 acres at Kijabe to begin a trade school to train masters of a trade, Africans being able to make their own living as shoe-making, printing, stone cutting, blacksmithing, tailoring, carpentry and tanning.

Evangelism through medicine: Extensive work was done in the medical sphere. The first medical doctor to serve with the A.I.M. was Dr. John E. Henderson who came in 1901. In addition to the dispensaries on the mission stations, there were clinics visited by missionary nurses, and three major hospitals where bodily needs were cared for. Evangelistic services were also held at these dispensaries and hospitals, introducing the people to the claims of Christ.

African evangelists and teachers: Undoubtedly, the most important agent in evangelism was the African Christian who served as evangelist and school teacher. From the earliest days of the mission there was the recognition that 'evangelization must be done by the Africans themselves', as Peter Cameron Scott wrote in his diary.⁶¹ The vision was to train the Africans to be pastors so that they could staff the stations in a few years and

the missionaries be freed to move on to unreached territory.⁶²

John Stauffacher, the Extension Director of the A.I.M., gave an address to the A.I.M. Missionary Conference in 1912 in which he affirmed: "All we can hope for is to train those who shall do the work while we spread from tribe to tribe... Unless we hold continually before the native that the work is theirs, and we have come simply to show them how to do it, we shall never make much progress."⁶³ Thus the number of evangelists, employed by the A.I.M., continued to grow. In 1922 there were 200 African evangelists, and by the late 1930's a reported 1,600 'native evangelists' working among twenty-five tribes in East and Central Africa.

The A.I.M. planned to open a Bible School in 1918. But flu and a smallpox epidemic broke out and within six days Mr. White, the man designated to open the Bible School, had died with dysentery.

In 1928 the A.I.M. founded the first Bible School in Machakos for the Akamba. Mr. Guilding, the first teacher for the Ukamba Bible School, taught all the students in Kikamba until he retired in 1953. In 1929 Moffat Bible School was opened at Kijabe with Mr. Charles Teasdale the first teacher. This Bible School was intended for a number of tribes, including the Gikuyu, Masai, and Kalenjin, and therefore, from the beginning they used Kiswahili as the medium of instruction. A Bible School at Ogada, overlooking Lake Victoria, intended for the Luo, opened for a number of years, but eventually was closed down. Over the years more Bible Schools have opened until by 2000 there were more than 1,000 students studying for ministry in twenty-one Bible training institutions in the Africa Inland Church, Kenya.

Distinctives of the A.I.M.

A.I.M. with reputation as 'American Mission': Among the missions entering Kenya in the early days, the A.I.M. was quite distinctive. Though from the beginning there were non-Americans serving with the mission, the A.I.M. became known as 'the American Mission', no doubt due to the predominance of Americans in the A.I.M. and the fact that the American Home Council governed the missionary policy on the field for a period of time. The 'American Mission' was in contrast to the Church of Scotland Mission, Church Missionary Society and the United Methodist Church Mission, all coming from the British Isles and thus more closely associated with the colonial government.

Though the A.I.M. was known as the 'American Mission' in Kenya, she quickly became an International Mission with the British Home Council

formed in 1906, the Australian Home Council in 1916, the South African Home Council in 1919 and the Canadian Home Council in 1936. Today A.I.M. missionaries come from twelve different nations in five continents.

A.I.M. as an interdenominational mission: The A.I.M. was also distinctive in that she was not a denominational mission. As an inter-denomination and non-denominational mission, the A.I.M. missionaries have come from many different church backgrounds.

This inter-denominational distinctive led to various problems. In the 1912 A.I.M. constitution, it was stated that 'when it is deemed wise by the Field Council to organize a church, the missionary in charge may elect the form of church government.'⁶⁴ Church government had to evolve. These problems were resolved through meetings of missionaries and church leaders, the latter being in the majority. The present church government of the Africa Inland Church reflects the models of the Presbyterian and Episcopalian forms of church government. This no doubt is due in part to the sister Protestant missions in Kenya (Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist) with which A.I.M. missionaries felt a kindred spirit due to the evangelical spirit among them arising out of the Great Awakenings of the 19th century. Because of these kindred feelings there was serious discussion of forming one single Protestant Church in Kenya and so church government and worship liturgy were developed so as to be compatible among the four missions.

When the question arose in 1929 of ordaining African men to the ministry, one discerning missionary asked the question: "To ordain native ministers, surely they will have to be recognized as ordained men of something...either A.I.M. or the African Church. And when we ordain native ministers of the A.I.M. does not that make the A.I.M. a denomination with certain Church rules (and) orders ect (sic)?"⁶⁵ In effect he was asking whether the A.I.M. could act like a denomination by ordaining men and yet remain a non-denominational mission. Such unique problems had to be resolved by the A.I.M.

A.I.M. with doctrinal differences: Though inter-denominational, the A.I.M. Home Council in America was greatly influenced by Dispensational Theology from the beginning. Prominent American leaders and missionaries of the A.I.M. have had strong dispensational convictions and backgrounds. Dr. A.T. Person was not only 'the chief adviser in the organization of the mission in the early days but through the years up to the time of his death he continued a warm friend and most valued adviser in the emergencies that arose'.⁶⁶ Presidents of the American Home Council included Dr. Reuben A.

Torrey, 1911-1928; and Dr. Harry Ironside, 1942-1947. A large number of missionaries were trained at Philadelphia Bible Institute and Moody Bible Institute.

In contrast to the dispensational, premillennial orientation of the American Home Council, the British, Australian and South African Home Councils were not thus oriented. They were largely Amillennial in eschatology. This has led to some conflicts on the field. For example, in order to accommodate the non-dispensationalists, the A.I.M. constitution does not contain any statement concerning the Millennium. But through missionary leadership in Kenya, pre-millennialism has been included in the constitution of the Africa Inland Church, sometimes creating problems for those missionaries who are not pre-millennial.

A.I.M. as 'Faith mission': Unlike the other Christian missionaries entering Kenya, the A.I.M. was considered a Faith' Mission. John Stauffacher stated that missionaries did not go to Africa 'unless they had a clear call from God to that field and then they were to trust Him alone for the supply of their needs either through honest labor or by gifts direct from others'.⁶⁷ As the A.I.M. frequently stated: "As to needs, full information; as to funds, non-solicitation." The founding fathers stated: "The A.I.M. would rather receive prayerful, free will offering of a dime than the prayerless, solicited gift of a dollar."⁶⁸

This 'faith' policy was patterned after J. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission. It was also the policy by which Charles Hurlburt had established the Pennsylvania Bible Institute, not sending students home if they had insufficient funds, but trusting the Lord together in prayer, without solicitation. The mission contributions were pooled and all missionaries supported equally through the pool system.

Without denominational backing and operating on the 'faith' basis led inevitably to a shortage of funds for education, expansion and development. This will be seen later on.

Throughout the years there has been disagreement over the meaning of the Faith Basis, beginning from the first decade. Stauffacher reported that the original phrase, 'As to needs, full information', was changed within ten years to read, 'As to the work, full information', because "[I]t never intended that individual or specific needs of the mission were to be presented to the public but that such requests should be made known to God alone and only the WORK in general should be brought before the public."⁶⁹ The 'Faith Basis' has been modified through the course of time, though not without tensions and disagreements.⁷⁰

Education

We have seen that the school and mission were inseparable parts throughout the course of church history in Kenya. With regard to the A.I.M., Gratton states: “[A] history of the Mission’s educational program is in a real sense a history of the growth of the Church. The Church grew out of the school room; in fact, this is where it was born. For better or worse, Church and school in the early days were practically synonymous.”⁷¹

Education – a means of evangelism: During the first twenty-five years the A.I.M. developed and supported the schools as a means of evangelism. Education was always conceived by the A.I.M. as a means toward evangelism, an auxiliary in helping them to produce a literate church which could read the Bible. Higher education was never their contemplated goal. At the First Council of the A.I.M., they agreed upon an article which stated: “In view of the many untouched millions, we feel called to do a thorough evangelistic work, rather than to build up strong educational centers.”⁷²

Ambivalent attitude toward education: When the church began to expand vigorously in the 1920’s, and when the Africans began to clamour for more and more schools, the A.I.M. entered a period of ambivalence toward education, dating from 1920-1945. Oliver remarks: “As the Christian community increased, education began to outgrow its avowedly evangelistic beginnings.”⁷³ And this fact bothered many A.I.M. missionaries.

In those early days Lee Downing, George Rhoad and McKenrick were the prime movers, supporting education. But John Stauffacher disagreed. He wrote:

If we are to simply drift with many other missions into educational work, then I feel very strongly that the A.I.M. will wholly miss the purpose for which it was called into being. I would rather hope that we may turn strongly toward evangelistic effort, and still hope for a real spiritual Revival, that many of the poor natives may yet be won, and many cleansed and purified before our Lord comes.⁷⁴

Several other factors led the A.I.M. toward an ambivalent attitude toward education. When the colonial government began offering educational grants in 1925, the A.I.M. hesitated, fearing that this would entail government control. Many also believed that such grants were contrary to the ‘faith’ basis of the mission. From the inauguration of the A.I.M., there was agreement that the mission would not present any specific financial needs to anyone nor ask men for money needed in the work. ‘As to funds, non-solicitation.’ Missionaries alleged that receiving grants from the

government, because that entailed requesting assistance, amounted to a violation of the 'faith' basis.

But Harmon Nixon entered the fray with the observation that missionaries ASK for concessions for reduced rates when traveling. No A.I.M. missionary has been accused of violating the faith basis because he applies for discounts from business houses and steamship companies. He argued that when the A.I.M. applied for educational grants, they were only asking that funds be released from the taxes which the African had already paid.

A factor contributing toward the A.I.M.'s ambivalence toward education, overlooked many times, was the absence of adequate funds to carry on extensive educational work. Because the A.I.M. was not backed financially by a mission board or church denomination in the homeland, and because of their 'faith' policy, they frequently ran short of funds. This 'American Mission' was recognized as poorer than her counterparts which were backed by denominational mission boards. Their conviction that the financial needs could not be made known to supporters meant a frequent shortage. A letter from Nixon is representative of many others. "Owing to the shortage in the N.E. and I. fund, and the unwillingness of our people to assume the support of their own teachers and evangelists, we have had to close our school."⁷⁵

With limited resources, the growing number of schools detracted from those funds needed to carry forth the evangelistic goal. This was even felt by other missions engaged more heavily with educational work. In 1938 Canon Hillard of the Church Missionary Society lamented that they had been concerned 'to build upwards and not outwards.' By 1935 the C.M.S. passed a Minute that the C.M.S. should not undertake any more Primary Education because the evangelistic work was suffering due to the many demands made on the missionary by Primary and Secondary Education."⁷⁶

Another factor undoubtedly contributed toward the A.I.M. attitude toward education was the educational background of many of the earlier missionaries.

Those who founded the Mission felt that the mission boards then existing were so hard pressed in their work in other fields that large portions of Africa were being neglected and that there was need of special effort apart from existing boards. They also felt that there was a large number of consecrated men and women, who did not have means nor the time, for a long period of education, yet who were eager to take up Christian work and who possessed the qualities of head, heart and hand that often make

the best kind of workers even in the mission field. They believed that in Africa existed only sin, darkness, ignorance and barbarianism and that the men needed to meet these had no special need for specific scholastic and theological knowledge but that they needed that wisdom, energy, zeal, devotion and close walk with God which makes great a man that is no scholar, and makes greater the man that is. They believed that such men sent out as laymen under strong leadership would help much toward meeting the great need of Africa.⁷⁷

They believed that the conditions in Africa were "utterly different from those that call for the learning and culture of a Paul or an Apollos, but do call for the devotion and zeal of both. Here there is no Mars Hill with its philosophers, no Ephesus with its learning." Under these conditions the A.I.M. believed that education was not a priority in the preparation to be a missionary.⁷⁸

Referring to the growing use of laymen in the United States, the founding fathers of the A.I.M. declared: "We believe the day is here when the humbler rank and file of God's army must be recruited for the mission field."⁷⁹ Believing that the Mission could not recruit sufficient numbers of missionaries with a full theological education, they accepted those with only one or two years of Bible School.

Consequently, these missionaries lacked a vision for the need of higher education. In contrast to the A.I.M., the denominational missionaries were generally trained in seminaries with graduate level theological education. They prized higher education for the African in ways that the A.I.M. never could because of the missionaries' background.

Tension with A.I.M. over education policy: Because the A.I.M. was reluctant to engage heavily in educational work between 1920 and 1945, tensions began to grow between the Mission and the Church, and between the Mission and the Colonial Government. The government became increasingly distressed with the A.I.M., threatening to take over the schools. Members of the Africa Inland Church (A.I.C.) became increasingly restless. They saw their neighbours who belonged to other churches benefiting from advanced education, while the A.I.M. dragged her feet. Despite the growing pleas from the Kenyan A.I.M. Field Council, the American Home Council persisted in holding to their position taken in 1924, that Grants-in-Aid should not be accepted.

This situation led to a glaring educational deficiency in the A.I.M. spheres of mission influence. The Machakos schools were known to be backward. Since the Mission did not provide enough schools, the

government stepped in to establish some. Although the A.I.M. was a member of the Alliance which began the Alliance High School in Kenya in 1926, the first high school in Kenya, no Akamba attended for the first three years. In 1929 when scholarships were given to six Akamba, most of them came from the Machakos School which was taught in Kiswahili and therefore poorly prepared to study in English at the Alliance High School. The Principal of Alliance reported: "The Akamba are more backward on arrival at the Alliance High School than any other tribe."⁸⁰ This was due in part to the poorly trained A.I.M. missionaries unable to teach in and administer quality schools. In 1919 none of the A.I.M. missionaries in Kenya 'had completed the normal course at home'.⁸¹

The situation reached a crisis point by 1945 when Dr. Howard Ferrin, the President of Barrington College in Rhode Island, U.S.A., became a member of the American Home Council. Through his leadership as President of the American Home Council from 1947 onwards, the A.I.M. policy toward education changed.

Dr. Ferrin with Ralph Davis visited Kenya in 1948 to assess the situation. A meeting took place in Mbooni with various African church elders. The minutes are graphic indications of the depths of feeling.

Sakayo Nguku implored the Americans to be patient if hard questions were asked. He asked Ralph Davis if he had children. 'Yes,' came the reply. 'Can you break your child's leg?' 'Yes,' came the reply, 'but I would not.' Sakayo retorted: "Our church is your child...You have broken one leg of your child even though you have worked for fifty years. We have no preacher who can preach to foreigners. We have no teachers who can help their brothers...None can help the church by playing an organ."

Samson complained that the A.I.M. had discontinued sending money to the church in 1927. Whereas the government sends Africans to Makerere College, the A.I.M. has never sent an African to America. "You differentiate between your children and ours. We grow up with your children. Yours are given a good education and come back to Africa as leaders and we have to call them *bwana*. Ours are much behind yours though born in the same family." Philip continued:

I was a pupil and Mr. Nixon was my teacher. I was born in heathenism. From childhood, I have been instructed by the missionaries – just like Carol Weppler and Linnell Davis. Now Linnell is the Principal of Kangundo School...In 1927 Mr. Nixon came home from a Field Council meeting and told us that the well has dried up and the school had to be closed. I am your child in the Gospel now and forever. Why did the

stream dry up for me and not for the missionaries' children?⁸²

With intense pressure from the Africa Inland Church, estimated to number 65,000 in 1945, and with permission from the A.I.M. Council in America, Eric Barnett, serving as Kenyan Field Director and the Mission's Education Secretary, relentlessly pursued a crash programme of opening a minimum of twenty Secondary Schools in four years. The period from 1948 to 1963 was marked by a significant emphasis on education, with accompanying church growth enjoyed through this.⁸³

By the time of Kenyan independence, the A.I.M. with the A.I.C. had 800 Primary Schools, 100 Secondary Schools and 3 Teacher Training Colleges, possibly more schools than all other missions/churches put together. This was made possible because of the large recruitment of teachers through the A.I.M. In 1948 the A.I.M. had only 38 missionaries in Kenya with four of them in education. By 1963 there were 350 A.I.M. missionaries in Kenya with 300 of them engaged in education. Thus through the leadership of Eric Barnett the A.I.M. surged ahead in promoting education, with evangelism taking front and centre in the whole process.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION

By God's grace the A.I.M. has been instrumental through evangelism in planting large, flourishing churches in Eastern and Central Africa. From the earliest days of the A.I.M., the Mission envisioned the planting of an indigenous church. In the A.I.M. Constitution of 1912, we read: "It shall be the policy of the Mission to establish a self-supporting, self-extending and self-governing, native Church."⁸⁵ But the route was long and tortuous.

Thirty years after the arrival of the A.I.M. in Kenya, the first Bible School was opened in 1928 in Machakos and a second in 1929 at Kijabe. From these schools went forth trained pastors and evangelists, no doubt helping to launch enormous expansion in the 1920's and 1930's. Some of these became licensed for the ministry in the 1930's. But the A.I.M. waited nearly fifty years to ordain the first African to the ministry, an event which took place on April 19, 1945.⁸⁶

In the mean time consideration was being given to the establishing of an autonomous church. Discussion took place in 1929 at the Annual Conference of missionaries at Kijabe. The differences in church organizations between the various A.I.M. stations had to be resolved. By 1942 the churches established by the A.I.M. became organized as a new denomination and in 1943 the Church's Constitution was ratified and its Rules and Regulations formulated.⁸⁷ At first the church was known as the

Africa Inland Mission Church. But in 1943 'Mission' was dropped from the title. By 1947 the A.I.C. became registered with the government.⁸⁸

Although the A.I.C. was now autonomous, they always felt like a junior partner, overpowered by the senior. The former relationship was hard to break. Describing the former authoritarian and paternalistic approach of the missionaries, Harry Thuku said many years before: "[P]eople said that the A.I.M. would not discuss any matter or policy with Africans; instead they made their own rules at Kijabe, and then would call the African Christians and tell them what had been decided."⁸⁹ Such patterns of behaviour were hard to break. Furthermore, the large number of missionaries with their relatively higher level of education, and their access to financial resources overseas, undoubtedly contributed to the feeling by the Africans that they were the junior partners.

As Kenya lurched toward political independence, the A.I.C. likewise wanted to be liberated from the smothering relationship with the A.I.M. The A.I.M. Annual Kenya Field Conference in 1960 recognized that 'with the coming of self-government in Kenya, some changes will undoubtedly need to be made in the Mission organization.' Consequently, in 1961 a Special Study Committee was set up with the Executive of the A.I.M. Field Council and the A.I.C. Advisory Committee to draw up an 'agreement between the Church and Mission on future working relationships'.⁹⁰

But nothing substantial was decided in the following decade. The A.I.M. did not want to 'squench' the question raised by the African Church leaders. But they were reluctant to make radical changes. In 1969 the Field Secretary for the A.I.M., Eric Barnett, wrote to Sid Langford of the American Home Council, assuring him: "As far as the A.I.C. is concerned, we can truthfully say that ALL the leadership is 'Africanized.'"⁹¹ But this did not include the various Bible Schools and Colleges, the various departments such as medical and literature for they were not 'Africanized' at that time.

After much reluctance and heart searching, and with a change of A.I.M. field leadership, the A.I.M. Field Council under the direction of Frank Frew, agreed to a new relationship. On October 16, 1971, the A.I.M. became a 'Department' of the A.I.C. All station properties were handed over to the Africa Inland Church. The A.I.M. missionaries now became members of the Africa Inland Church and subordinate to the church leaders.⁹²

However, the relationship did not satisfy the church leaders for long. Some how the dichotomous relationship of the A.I.M./A.I.C. seemed to

persist in the minds of the Africans. The A.I.M. retained her own name, office, treasury, and officers. Through the A.I.C. leadership of the late Bishop Wellington Mulwa, a new relationship was established in 1979 with the role of the A.I.M. limited to the recruiting and seconding of missionaries to work with and under the Africa Inland Church, Kenya.

With the national churches firmly established in the older countries of A.I.M. ministry (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, C.A.E., Sudan), the A.I.M. in recent years has branched out to other countries, twelve altogether, working with already established churches to evangelize the unreached people groups and train church leaders in fulfillment of her mission purpose.

END NOTES

-
- ¹ David B. Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook* (Kisumu: Evangel Pub. House, 1972), 30.
 - ² W.B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima Press Ltd., 1981), 1.
 - ³ J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours During an Eighteen Year's Residence in Eastern Africa* (London: Frank Case & Co., 1968. First published in 1860), 283.
 - ⁴ Charles P. Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958),
II, 109.
 - ⁵ Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, 300.
 - ⁶ Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, II, 107.
 - ⁷ Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, 351.
 - ⁸ Groves, *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*, II, 107.
 - ⁹ Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, 118.
 - ¹⁰ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 22.
 - ¹¹ Catherine S. Miller, *Peter Cameron Scott* (London: Parry Jackman, n.d.), 15-19.
 - ¹² John Stauffacher, "History of the Africa Inland Mission." (B) 1914. A slightly different version from c. 1915. Unprocessed, Accession No. 82-150. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Ill.
 - ¹³ John A. Gratton, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya Between 1895-1971* (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1974), 17.
 - ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.
 - ¹⁵ Stauffacher, "History of the Africa Inland Mission." 1914, 1.
 - ¹⁶ Kenneth Richardson, *Garden of Miracles: A History of the Africa Inland Mission* (London: Victory Press, 1968), 27.
 - ¹⁷ *Hearing and Doing* (Volumes I-XXI, 1898-1916. Mission Periodical of Africa Inland Mission), I, 1, 1896:3, 4.
 - ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 1, 1896:3,4.

- ¹⁹ Stauffacher, "History of the Africa Inland Mission." 1914, 3.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ²¹ *Hearing and Doing*, II, 1, 1897:8
- ²² *Ibid.*, II, 3, 1897:5
- ²³ *Ibid.*, II, 1, 1897:11ff.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 9, 1896
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 12, 1896
- ²⁶ Willis R. Hotchkiss, *Then and Now in Kenya Colony* (NY: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1937), 51.
- ²⁷ *Hearing and Doing*, III, 5 1898:5,6.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1899:5
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 11, 1899:5.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 1, 1900:5.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, V, 1, 2 1901: 5-10.
- ³² *Ibid.*, V, 1,2, 1901:8
- ³³ *Ibid.*, V, 6, 1901
- ³⁴ T. H. Cope, "The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya – Aspects of its History (1895-1945)." M. Phil. Dissertation, London University, 1979.
- ³⁵ *East African Standard*, 'Africa Inland Mission Celebrates its Jubilee.' 23 March 1946.
- ³⁶ Kenneth Richardson, *Garden of Miracles*, 41.
- ³⁷ *Hearing and Doing*, II, 1, 1897:5,6.
- ³⁸ Gratton, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church In Kenya*, 25.
- ³⁹ *Hearing and Doing*, VI, 7,8, 1902:3
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 1903:19.
- ⁴¹ Africa Inland Mission, "Constitution and Rules of Government," 1902. Archives of A.I.M., Nairobi, Kenya.
- ⁴² *Hearing and Doing*, II, 10, 1897:3.
- ⁴³ Hotchkiss, *Then and Now in Kenya Colony*, 13.
- ⁴⁴ Africa Inland Mission, "General Council Meeting of the Africa Inland Mission at Kijabe, Sept. 7, 1911." Archives of the A.I.M., Nairobi, Kenya.
- ⁴⁵ Gladys Stauffacher, *Faster Beats the Drum* (Pearl River, NY: Africa Inland Mission, 1978)
- ⁴⁶ K.N. Phillips, *Tom Collins of Kenya* (London: Africa Inland Mission, 1965)
- ⁴⁷ Cope, *The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya – Aspects of its History*, 68-74.
- ⁴⁸ These and other prayer requests are found in the A.I.M. Archives, Nairobi.
- ⁴⁹ Cope, "The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya – Aspects of its History", 22.
- ⁵⁰ Barrett, *Kenya Churches Handbook*, 24;
Stuart Bryson, *Light in Darkness: The Story of the Nandi Bible* (London: Parry Jackman Scripture Illustrations Ltd., 1959).
- ⁵¹ *Hearing and Doing*, VII, 5, 1903:11.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, VI, 2, 1902:5.
- ⁵³ Gratton, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya*, 122-

125.

⁵⁴ Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1966), 178.

⁵⁵ *Hearing and Doing*, X, 3, 1905:12,13.

⁵⁶ C.G. Baeta, *Christianity in Tropical Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 15,16.

⁵⁷ Timothy Kendagor, A.I.C. Principal of Kapsabet Bible College. Personal Interview, 1982.

⁵⁸ Cope, *The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya – Aspects of its History*, 31.

⁵⁹ Frank Frew, A.I.M. missionary, former Kenya Field Director. Lecture in 1980.

⁶⁰ *Hearing and Doing*, XI, 2, 1906:8.

⁶¹ Miller, *Peter Cameron Scott*, 43.

⁶² *Hearing and Doing*, VII, 5, 1903:12,13.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Oct-Dec. 1912.

⁶⁴ “Africa Inland Mission, Constitution and Policy.” Philadelphia: Africa Inland Mission, 1912.

⁶⁵ Gratton, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya*, 233.

⁶⁶ John Stauffacher, “History of the Africa Inland Mission.” (A) File 16, Box 24, Collection 81, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁶⁷ Cope, *The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya*, 16.

⁶⁸ Stauffacher, “History of the Africa Inland Mission.” (B), 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁰ Cope, *The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya*, 74-90.

⁷¹ Gratton, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya*, 156.

⁷² Africa Inland Mission, “Memo of Information received from Dr. Hurlburt under date of June 29th, regarding Properties held by the A.I.M.” File 17, Box 15, Collection 81, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁷³ Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.), 212.

⁷⁴ John Stauffacher, Letter to Henry D. Campbell, Feb. 23, 1927. File 10, Box 13, Collection 81. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁷⁵ Harmon Nixon, Letter to Ralph Davis, 27 Feb. 1939. File 14, Box 23. Collection 81. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁷⁶ Cope, *The Africa Inland Mission in Kenya*, 33.

⁷⁷ Stauffacher, “History of the Africa Inland Mission.” (B) 1914, 2.

⁷⁸ *Hearing and Doing*, I, 1896:3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁰ J. Forbes Munro, *Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands 1889-1939*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 160.

⁸¹ Taken from Munro 1975:160. He derived his information from the Report of the Education Commission which received this information from L.H. Downing, Field Director of the A.I.M.

⁸² G. Weppler, Minutes of Meeting with Africans at Mbooni, 19 June 1948. File 10,

Box 12, Collection 81. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁸³ This brief summation is derived from Gration 1974:156-197; Cope 1979:43-62; 118-151; Anderson 1970.

⁸⁴ Eric Barnett, Personal Interview, June 11, 2004.

⁸⁵ Africa Inland Mission, Constitution and Policy." (Philadelphia: Africa Inland Mission, 1912).

⁸⁶ Africa Inland Church, *First Anniversary of the Africa Inland Church, 15th October 1972*. Kijabe, Kenya: A.I.C. Publications, 1972.

⁸⁷ Gration, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya*, 241.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁸⁹ Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970), 9.

⁹⁰ Africa Inland Mission, Minutes of the Committees for "Kenya: A.I.C. and A.I.M. Relationships." Box 65, Box 5, Collection 81. Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁹¹ Eric Barnett, Letter to Sid Langford, 25 Feb. 1969. File 86, Box 5, Collection 81. Archives of Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois.

⁹² Gration, *The Relationship of the A.I.M. and its National Church in Kenya*, 336.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF CHURCH COOPERATION AND UNITY IN KENYA

Watson A. Omulokoliⁱ

INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

The theme of co-operation and unity among Christians is not only taken for granted in the Bible, but is also deep-seated therein. Moreover, Christians are strongly urged to recognize, embrace, and foster it in their dealings with one another. This being the case it is commendable that from the time of its introduction and establishment in Kenya, Christianity has exhibited a strong spirit of cooperation and unity among its constituent Churches and Christian groups. Occasionally there have been interruptions to this trend here and there, but cumulatively, the pace has been maintained from the earliest times to the present.

There are many spheres of the Church's existence in Kenya in which co-operation and unity have been demonstrated. In addition to such spiritual spheres as evangelism and Christian nurture, the Church in Kenya has forged togetherness in tackling every realm of man's life and well-being. Although it is often taken for granted on the local scene, the level of co-operation and unity which pertains in Kenya is such a unique phenomenon that there are few nations in the world which can rival Kenya's experience. This is a priceless, singular, and all-important legacy which we must consciously safeguard and nourish.

ⁱ Professor Watson A. O. Omulokoli is the former Chaplain and Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies in Kenyatta University, Kenya. He earned his BTh in Biblical Studies and BA in Theology from Warner Pacific College in Portland, Oregon; his MA in Church History from Wheaton Graduate School in Wheaton, Illinois, in 1967; and his PhD in Church History from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland in 1981.

In a real sense, the fact of co-operation and unity among churches in Kenya dates back to the time of the pioneer missionaries, Johann Ludwing Krapf, and his associates, Johann Rebmann and James Erhardt. This becomes clear when it is realized that these early missionaries were German Lutherans who came to initiate Christian work in East Africa under the auspices of a British Anglican Church group, the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Not long after succeeding in establishing CMS work, beginning in 1844, the same Krapf was instrumental in introducing Methodist work in East Africa in 1862. At that time, he helped direct a group of Methodists to the Kenyan coast where they opened their station at Ribe under the charge of Thomas Wakefield.

After being confined to the coast of Kenya for about fifty years, Christian endeavours moved into the interior in the 1890's. From then up to the mid -1910's there was an influx of Christian Missions into the densely populated regions of central and western Kenya. Once they began settling down in their respective territories of focus, they realized and envisioned the need for working out strategies towards co-operation and unity in their missionary endeavours. While it is true that a multiplicity of Christian Churches is a significant feature of Christianity in Kenya, it is equally true that the story of co-operation and unity among these bodies is a distinctive and important landmark in the history of Christianity in the country. In the early stages, the efforts originate from Vihiga and Maseno in western Kenya, before moving to Nairobi and Kikuyu in central Kenya.

INITIAL FOUNDATIONS IN WESTERN KENYA

In 1919, the head of Anglican Church work in western Kenya, Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen, commented on how, with the exception of Roman Catholics, the various Christian Missions in western Kenya were working under commendable comity agreements and in mutual cooperation with one another.¹ This state of goodwill and common fellowship was almost as old as the existence of these bodies in the region. They seem to have been drawn together essentially on three grounds. In the first instance, they recognized and wanted to demonstrate their common allegiance to Jesus Christ. Secondly, they were aware that they shared the objective of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the supreme aim of their respective groups. Then thirdly, they wanted to minimize any conflict among themselves while establishing the Christian faith in the territory under their

care. Their solidarity was cemented in two pioneer conferences on co-operation and unity as held at Vihiga and Maseno.

PIONEER CONFERENCE AT VIHIGA (End of 1907 -Beginning of 1908)

1. Preparations and Implementation:

When the earliest steps at co-operation and unity among Christian groups in western Kenya were taken, it was Owen's predecessor, Rev. John Jamieson Willis,² who was in the forefront of these efforts in a very focused manner. When the idea of creating fraternal links was first broached in the autumn of 1907, it was received with much enthusiasm. Before long, the need to come together "both for prayer and for consultation as to lines of future work" led to wider possibilities. The immediate results came with arrangements for holding a five-day conference at the Friends Africa Mission (FAM)³ station at Vihiga in the period straddling the end of 1907; then beginning of 1908.⁴ It is a tribute to the far-sightedness of the men involved in this endeavour that before the celebrated World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910,⁵ they had already embarked on the adventure of co-operation in their Christian missionary endeavours in western Kenya.

The Conference went on as planned with an average attendance of twenty for the various sessions. The majority of those present were missionaries of bodies that were already working in western Kenya, but still there were some missionaries who, although from outside the geographical limits of this region, had close identification with work there through varied means of association. Those present included such groups as Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) who observe the Sabbath on Saturdays, Baptist groups like Africa Inland Mission (AIM) with their emphasis on adult baptism based on the confession of faith in Christ, the Quakers with their disavowal of the necessity of any mode of outward baptism, and the Anglicans whose adherence was to infant baptism in the main. Yet despite these differences, as the conference progressed, those involved began to see "how deep and real is the unity which underlies all the more superficial differences."⁶

On one hand, the missionaries were concerned with the people among whom they were working. On the other hand, they sought to deal with the

relationship among themselves as different missionary groups. With regard to the people, they tried to deal with two issues. First, to display a united front by eliminating any competitive conflicts. Second, they aimed at reducing probable bewilderment by agreeing on “ the first principles of what they were to teach them.”⁷ In the sphere of the relationship between the various groups, they set out to discuss openly and frankly how to work together with mutual understanding, without surrendering their particular distinctives and positions.

2. Programme and Discussions

During the conference itself, the programme was made up of a number of elements. To begin with, the opening sessions of each day were devotions which included Bible expositions from the First Epistle of John as conducted by Mr. C. E. Hurlburt of the Africa Inland Mission. Following a short tea-break, there was what Willis described as the conference proper. Here, the mornings were devoted to discussion on three areas of concern. The afternoons were then set aside for dealing with language questions and work. In the words of Willis, mornings involved

- (1) Our relations to the powers, that be
 - (2) Our relations to one another as missionaries
 - (3) Our relations to the natives
- (a) The presentation of the Gospel to the primitive tribes, the elementary missionary work; (b) the training of child races, or the educational side of missionary work.⁸

3. Key Accomplishments

Among other accomplishments, they agreed on the formula of recognizing converts of sister missions with the same full-fledged acceptance that they were given there. Regarding the area of language and translation, they came to the understanding that spelling should be standardized with all translations centralized. It was agreed that linguistic work in Ololuyia would be co-ordinated by Mr. E.J. Rees of the FAM at Vihiga and that of the Dholuo by Rev. J.J. Willis of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) at Maseno. In this connection, it was strongly felt that unless it was unavoidable, the books used in the various missions should be the same everywhere.

One of the more sensitive and tricky issues was that of entering into comity agreements by demarcating spheres of operation. If a settlement

were reached, it would stem the problem and confusion that would have arisen out of overlapping of territories of work. In the end, a tentative understanding was agreed upon. It stated that, "Subject to the approval of the authorities of the missionary societies involved we decided on a definite participation of the territory among us, in order to avoid, where possible, creating unnecessary confusion in time to come".⁹

The conference provided a worthwhile platform for enriching fellowship, corporate prayer, and beneficial discussion. Apart from the definite agreements reached, the missionaries were encouraged to discover from interaction in this conference that in one direction, the things which separated them were minor and superficial, while in another direction they learnt that the common factors which they shared were many and deep. The result was that this conference left them with an impetus to plan more meetings for mutual prayer, fellowship, and consultation in the future. Willis gave a summary of this conference of 1907-1908 at Vihiga as follows:

It was purely local conference attended by the representatives of different missionary societies working in Kavirondo. It discussed purely local and practical difficulties. It decided on a common policy in regard to language problems, the use of *lingua franca*, the unification of native dialects, the submissions of translations to one centre, a common method of spelling, the same names for God for Spirit for soul, and the like.¹⁰

UNITED MISSIONARY CONFERENCE AT MASENO (January 4-8, 1909)

1. Prior Arrangements

In tune with the wishes of those who attended the first ever conference on co-operation and unity in Kenya as held at Vihiga at the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908, their call for continued consultation resulted in a second follow-up; one at the CMS Maseno station on January 4-8, 1909.¹¹ Attending it were twenty-seven missionaries from eight different Missionary societies.¹² Although, like the previous one at Vihiga it was essentially for bodies working in western Kenya, there were some outside representatives such as Dr. Henry E. Scott of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), Kikuyu.¹³ For this reason, in addition to issues peculiar to western Kenya, the deliberations took into account a wider spectrum. On

the whole, this conference built on the gains of earlier agreements and went a step further by making more definite substantive proposals for the Missions.

Prior to the conference, the prime mover of efforts at cooperation and unity, Rev. John Jamieson Willis of the Church Missionary Society (CSM), Maseno, wrote a letter outlining what the conference aimed at covering. This was essential in order to allow those coming to have "a fairly clear idea" of what was to be discussed ahead of its commencement. The letter concludes with a prayer that, "God Himself by His Spirit may direct all our consultation."

2. Programme Details

The programme itself commenced on the evening of 4th January, 1909, with an address by Mr. Arthur Chilson of the FAM, and ended with a closing address by Mr. Willis R. Hotchkiss of the Lumbwa Industrial Mission (LIM), on 8th January. Each day began with a devotional meeting for one and a half hours. These were based on daily readings followed by the Evangelical Alliance for the week of prayer, January 3-9.¹⁴ After a short tea-break, the main business of the conference then followed. It ran as follows:

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--|
| 5 th | 10.45-12.15

2.00-4.00 | Special Subject. Native custom and thought.
Nilotic: Paper by Mr. A. Carscallen (SDA)
Bantu: Paper by Mr. F. Richardson (SACIM)
Men: Discussion on above papers
Ladies: Work among women and girls |
| 6 th | 10.45-12.15

2.00-4.00 | Special Subject: Mission in western Kenya
Ten minute reports on work in Mission Stations
Discussion on the Reports |
| 7 th | 10.45-12.15

2.00-4.00 | Special Subject: Our aims and ideals
Paper by Rev. J.J. Willis (CMS)
Language discussion: Nilotic and Bantu groups |
| 8 th | 10.45-12.15

2.00-4.00 | Special Subject: Missionary Methods
Paper by Dr. H. E. Scott (CSM)
Discussion on Missionary Policy in Kenya ¹⁵ |

3. Results and Outcome

At the end of the conference a number of conclusions were reached and some very detailed resolutions passed.¹⁶ In the area of language, efforts were made to translate the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the hymns which were in current usage in the various Missions working in western Kenya. With regard to education, three decisions were made. First, the conference took steps to appoint two of its members to represent the constituent groups from western Kenya on the Missionary Education Board for Kenya. Second, it was passed that *Kiswahili* be used in schools for advanced education, but the wider issue of a common language in schools was forwarded to the Missionary Education Board for discussion and decision. Third, it was strongly recommended that boarding schools be established for boys and girls respectively, but situated at different stations. For those who were interested in becoming Christians, it was important that they commit themselves to abandoning certain practices and to embracing others as spelt out. Before admission to Church membership, they were to undergo two years of instruction in the basics of the Christian faith, together with evaluation and scrutiny of their lives and character.

In preparation for the conference, Willis had sent word to the CSM in Uganda that they would need an expert to advise on language matters during the deliberations. In this regard, Mr. F. Rowling was dispatched to go and handle the assignment. At the end of the conference, his view was that, "The most striking feature of the whole conference was undoubtedly the deep desire for unity and harmony manifested most prominently."¹⁷ In a later assessment of the achievements made, one CMS missionary in western Kenya, Mr. A.E. Pleydell, pointed out that despite the hurdles that remained to be surmounted, these endeavours represented a step in the right direction towards the attainment of the desired "unity and comity in missions".¹⁸ All this was indeed in line with the greatest legacy of the Maseno Conference. This was contained in its key resolution which stated that, "this conference regards the development, organization and establishment of a united, self-governing, self-supporting, and self-extending native Church as the ideal of our missionary work."¹⁹ These words were to be echoed in all conferences on the cooperation and unity of the Church in Kenya.²⁰

TRANSITION FROM WESTERN TO CENTRAL KENYA

1. Foundations in Western Kenya

Following the Vihiga and Maseno conferences, the next and third conference was planned for the year 1910 at the Friends' Africa Mission (FAM) station of Kaimosi. These arrangements were overtaken by events when the churches in Central Kenya came on the scene of activity. As a result, the Kaimosi conference did not take place, with the focus shifting from western Kenya to central Kenya. It now became obvious that the Vihiga and Maseno conferences would remain the only and last conferences of this nature to be held in western Kenya. All the same, even when the theatre of operations moved to central Kenya, it was underscored that the pioneer endeavours of Vihiga and Maseno served as the birth, nursery, and foundation of all future efforts in cooperation and unity among Churches in Kenya.²¹

2. Kijabe Conference

In between the two western Kenya conferences, there was one country-wide conference at the Africa Inland Mission (AIM) station of Kijabe in the autumn of 1908. Willis attended this conference in which the emphasis seems to have been on approaching work among the indigenous people from the same perspective "rather than each Mission impressing on the young African Church forms of worship and doctrines peculiar to themselves".²² The attendance was about sixty, of whom Willis wrote, "Most of those present, as indeed, are the majority of the more recent missionaries to East Africa (Kenya), were Americans".²³ Although discouraging the pursuit of differences and appealing for emphasis on what is common, this conference did not come up with any clear-cut strategies or resolutions in the direction of cooperation and unity among the Churches. These were first articulated clearly and unequivocally at the Maseno conference.²⁴

3. Plans for a Conference in Nairobi

Although there had been projections for a third conference in western Kenya at Kaimosi in 1910 as a follow up on the first one at Vihiga and the second one at Maseno, this did not materialize. This was because at the conclusion of the Maseno conference in January 1909, Dr. H. E. Scott had announced plans for a country-wide conference in Central Kenya in Nairobi in June 1909.²⁵ The missionaries from western Kenya turned their focus on

this conference. Accordingly, at the end of their deliberations at Maseno, they chose delegates to represent western Kenya at the forthcoming Nairobi Conference.²⁶

UNITED MISSIONARY CONFERENCE, NAIROBI (June 7-11, 1909)

In accordance with prior plans, the various Missions in Kenya held a United Missionary Conference at the Railway Institute in Nairobi on June 7-11, 1909.²⁷ It had initially been anticipated that His Excellency, the Governor of Kenya, would open the conference. In his absence, the responsibility was given to an eminent visiting educationist, Prof. J. N. Frazer of Bombay, India.²⁸ Formally referred to as Principal Frazer, he gave the opening conference address and then declared it officially opened. Frazer went on to preside over the proceedings of the first day of the conference on Tuesday, 7th June, 1909.

Although there had been other earlier conferences at Vihiga in 1907-1908, and Kijabe in the autumn of 1908, in terms of lineage, the real predecessor of the Nairobi conference was the Maseno Conference in January 1909. Indeed, Maseno not only set the tone and inspiration for the Nairobi conference but it also provided the actual background structure and content. Firstly, the Nairobi conference, received wide and enthusiastic publicity at Maseno. Secondly, key delegates and participants were also identified there in advance. Third, and most crucially, the content of the proceedings and conclusions of Maseno served as the central foundations of the preparatory programme details of Nairobi.²⁹

Conference Proceedings

The groups listed as present were eight,³⁰ including the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Church of Scotland Missions (CSM), the Friends Africa Industrial Mission (FAIM, Kaimosi), the United Methodist Mission (UMM), the Lumbwa Industrial Mission (LIM), the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), and the Friends Industrial Mission (FIM, Pemba). The largest numbers came from AIM, CMS, and CSM, followed by FAIM (Kaimosi), and UMM, while the smallest in number were from LIM, SDA, and FIM (Pemba), with one person each.³¹ Although wider participation was open to "the general

public as well as members of the Conference”, the right to vote was “confined to members of Missionary Societies who have signed the conference roll”.³²

The deliberations of the conference were arranged thoughtfully and systematically with particular subjects assigned for different days. The first day was spent in presentations and discussions on educational matters. The second day was dedicated to issues dealing with the indigenous Church, with the third day focusing on customs of the indigenous people. Each day, resolutions were made to conclude the preceding discussions. On the final day these resolutions were reviewed and agreed upon as the basis of common operation. The first seven resolutions dealt with education, while the eighth to the fifteenth had to do with the indigenous Church, and the sixteenth to the nineteenth were connected with indigenous customs.³³

Each day the conference commenced with a devotional service conducted by delegates who had prior notice of their assignment. The service ran from 9.00 to 10.00 a.m. and was immediately followed by the main conference business. On the first day 7th June 1909, Rev. Marcus Falloon conducted the devotional service. On the second day, 8th June, it was Dr J. W. Arthur (CSM) who was in charge. On the third day, it was the responsibility of Rev. Lee H. Downing (AIM), while Mr. W.R. Hotchkiss (LIM) took the fourth and the last full day, 10th June.

In the same way in which care was taken to distribute duties to delegates from different Missions with regard to devotions, steps were taken to ensure diversity in presiding over the meetings. After the first day when Principal Frazer was in the chair, the second day went to Archdeacon R. H. Walker (CMS), the third day was handled by Rev. Charles E. Hurlburt (AIM) with Rev. Dr. H. E. Scott (CSM) taking the fourth and the last day. Whoever was in the chair presided over proceedings for the entire day.³⁴

Resolution and Recommendations

Among the resolutions which emerged out of this conference, those dealing with the indigenous Church were of special significance with regard to cooperation and unity. They arose out of a lengthy and thorough presentation by Willis, together with a lively and concerted discussion by the delegates. On the second day, Wednesday, with Archdeacon R. H.

Walker presiding, Willis read his paper entitled, "The desirability of a common Native Church". It dealt with all the salient points in detail and then pre-emptively went on to answer any anticipated objections that might be raised against the proposed scheme of cooperation and unity. He concluded by giving the live options as two: that of "a united Christian church, inclusive of all", and the fall back position of "a federation of Churches uniting for social, educational, linguistic work, and the like but maintaining a position of practical independence".³⁵

Willis had outlined four basic essentials, which he considered as the minimum requirements for the proposed united Native Church. When he was through with his paper, the missionaries were asked to respond specifically to any constraints that their sending societies might harbour against these ideals. Of the seven bodies represented, five expressed their willingness to accept the four essentials as presented by Willis. As already envisaged by Willis himself, the two Quaker groups were forthright in expressing reservations about two of the presented articles, the one of the two Sacraments, and that of the ordained ministry.³⁶ With appropriate elaborations, Willis outlined the four as:

1. The Bible, as our common standard of appeal
2. The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, as expressing our common faith
3. The two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper
4. A duly ordered and safeguarded Ministry.³⁷

Of all the resolutions passed at the conference, the one most directly linked to efforts at cooperation and unity was resolution VIII, which stated that "the orderly development, organization, and establishment of a united, self-supporting, and self-propagating Native Church be a chief aim in all mission work".³⁸ Of interest is the fact that although agreed upon at Nairobi, it in essence originated from Maseno,³⁹ and was at the very centre of discussions at Kikuyu in 1913, and subsequently at Kikuyu also in 1918.

Post-Conference Discussions

To continue deliberations on the feasibility of a united Native Church, it was proposed and agreed under resolution XII that a committee be appointed to deal with the issue. Employing the criterion of proportional

representation of the delegates present, those chosen by their groups to represent them were three from the CMS, two from the AIM, and one each from CSM, FAIM (Kaimosi), FIM (Pemba), UMM and the SDA.⁴⁰ Eventually this Native Church Committee chose a sub-committee consisting of Rev. H.E. Scott (Chairman, CSM), Rev. C.E. Hurlburt (AIM), Rev. J.J. Willis (CMS), and Mr. W. R. Hotchkiss(LIM).⁴¹ In this saga of the continuing venture in cooperation and unity so much progress had been made that this committee was given specific guidelines as to the way forward. In the words of Willis, "A representative Committee of all the Missions concerned had been appointed to consider the whole matter, and draw up, if possible, a feasible basis of union, and failing that federation."⁴²

The committee chosen in Nairobi in 1909 continued with its work after the conference. A number of meetings held in 1910 were especially fruitful.⁴³ At each stage, the committee kept the constituent Missions abreast of its discussions. Eventually, the committee came up with "a general scheme of missionary federation" as a prelude to the ultimate formation of a united Native Church. The scheme consisted of three parts. The first part had proposals of what would be "a basis of union for future united church." The second section dealt with what would be envisaged in "a scheme for missionary federation". The third part was made up of "proposals for consideration by the missions on common forms and usages which might be adopted". It is clear that the options were actually two, one dealing with "a basis of union" and the other outlining what would be entailed in a "federation" of missions.⁴⁴ Part three simply dealt with details of what might need to be considered in forging the groups together.

This three-part scheme was prepared by the committee for presentation at "the next representative Conference arranged for January, 1911."⁴⁵ When the proposals were duly presented to those present, the outcome was not encouraging in that, "The 1911 Conference ended in deadlock."⁴⁶ Those involved had no difficulties with one another, or with the thrust of cooperation and unity in general. Problems in the sphere of details were central to the breakdown, especially when viewed in the light of the traditions of the sending mother Missions or Societies. While enthusiastic about the prospects of a united Native Church in Kenya, the participating missionaries had to take into account the views of the home boards of their Missions, with whom they kept in constant touch regarding the ongoing deliberations. By and large, the home boards preferred a cautious

approach, especially when it came to full-fledged union.⁴⁷ It was on these grounds that one of the two options worked out by the committee in 1910 and presented to the representative conference of 1911, the one dealing with federations, proved to be the more favourable one. In the final analysis, it is the one, which was agreed upon as the priority recommendation for the next conference of 1913 at Kikuyu. The transition between 1909 and 1913 was summarized as follows:

In June 1909 the whole subject of a possible United Church was discussed at a Representative United Missionary Conference held in Nairobi and at which definite Resolutions with regard to it were adopted. A committee representing the various Missionary Societies working in BEA was appointed and they drew up in 1910 the Memorandum of the proposed constitution of (1) a United Native Church and (2) a Federation of Missions. It was this Memorandum which formed the basis of discussion by the Conference (of 1913) and which finally adopted with a few minor alterations the second of the two schemes.⁴⁸

END NOTES

¹ W.E. Owen, "Missionary Work Amongst the Kavirondo", *Uganda Notes*, July 1919 pp. 67-68

² R. Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (Nairobi Presbyterian Church of East Africa, 1970), p. 49.

³ Watson Omulokoli, "The Historical Development of the Anglican Church Among Abaluyia, 1905-1955" (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1981), pp. 66,90. It is instructive that Vihiga was opened in February, 1905 by Willis of the CMS, and handed over to the FAM in January 1906.

⁴ J.J. Willis, Maseno, January 14, 1908, in *Willis Papers* (London: Lambeth Palace Library), p. 181. Two grave mistakes have been made by those who have written about the history of co-operation and unity among Churches in Kenya. First, the Vihiga Conference has been totally ignored in most sources. Secondly, those who have mentioned this first ever conference of this nature have erroneously pointed out that it was at Maseno in 1908. The truth of the matter is that this first conference was at Vihiga in 1907-1908, and that the second and only conference at Maseno was held on January, 4-8, 1909.

⁵ W.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), pp. 281.

⁶ Willis, Maseno, January 14, 1908, in *Willis Papers*, p. 181.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 182

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Report of the Conference of Missionary Societies in British East Africa, Kikuyu, July 23-26, 1918, in *Owen Papers* CMSA Acc. 83 Z3.

¹¹ G.H. Mungeam (Compiler), Kenya: *Selected Historical Documents, 1884-1923* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1978), p. 148.

¹² F. Rowling, "A Missionary Conference in Kavirondo, B.E.A." in *Uganda Notes*, March, 1909, No. 119, p. 41. Here Rowling lists them as, "The Church Missionary Society, the Church of Scotland Mission (Kikuyu), the Africa Inland Mission (Kijabe), the Friends' African Industrial Mission, the African Compounds Mission, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Mission in the Lumbwa country, and the Friends' Mission". All that is needed is to streamline the identity of the groups.

¹³ R. Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya*, p. 50. There is indication here that among those attending were Dr. H.E. Scott and Dr. J. W. Arthur of the CSM.

¹⁴ G.H. Mungeam, *Kenya Selected Historical Documents*, p. 149.

¹⁵ Ibid. With some notations of my own for clarification.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 150. The detailed resolutions passed were in two categories. Those passed at the General Conference, and those passed in the Meeting of Men Only.

¹⁷ F. Rowling, "A Missionary Conference Kavirondo, B.E.A.", in *Uganda Notes*, March 1909, p. 41.

¹⁸ Pleydell's Annual Letter, On Furlough, February 3, 1910, No. 60.

¹⁹ G.H. Mungeam, *Selected Historical Documents*, p. 150. This is Resolution 1 of the General Conference. This is what F. Rowling has in mind when he writes of "With the object of working towards building up of a strong African Church in the future, to be self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending, and united on all essentials of the Christian Faith". F. Rowling, "A Missionary Conference", p. 41.

²⁰ Subsequent conferences in Nairobi (1909), Kikuyu (1913), and Kikuyu (1918) follow this text faithfully. In this connection, M.G. Capon makes two mistakes. First, he omits this Maseno conference and attributes to Kijabe, calling it a third conference at Kijabe in 1909. Secondly, he goes on to credit this resolution with his "Kijabe 1909". M.G. Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya: The Story of Co-operation between Missions and Churches in Kenya, 1913-1947* (Nairobi: Christian Council of Kenya, 1962), p.11.

²¹ R. Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya*, pp. 49-50.

²² M.G. Capon. *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p. 11.

²³ Willis, Maseno, November 11, 1908, in *Willis Papers*, p. 211.

²⁴ M.G. Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p. 11. The point has already been alluded to that Capon omits the Maseno Conference, substitutes it with one at Kijabe in 1909, and then goes on to attribute this key Resolution of Maseno to his "Kijabe 1909".

-
- ²⁵ F. Rowling, "A Missionary Conference in Kavirondo, B.E.A.", in *Uganda Notes*, March, 1909, p. 42.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ G.H. Mungeam, *Selected Historical Documents*, p. 151.
- ²⁸ John Anderson, *The struggle for the School: The Interaction of Missionary, Colonial Government and Nationalist enterprise in the development of formal education in Kenya* (Nairobi: Longman, 1970), p. 36.
- ²⁹ R. Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya*, p. 50.
- ³⁰ Horace R.A. Philip, *A New Day in Kenya* (London: World Dominion Press, 1936) p. 27
- ³¹ G.H. Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, p. 172.
- ³² Ibid., p. 151
- ³³ Ibid., pp. 152-171. Most of the information regarding this conference is taken from Mungeam.
- ³⁴ Ibid., pp. 151-169. There is a slight confusion on dates, with Friday being referred to as 11th (p.171), while Tuesday is 7th (pp. 151-152).
- ³⁵ Ibid., pp. 152-161. See also, Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya* p. 11.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 161
- ³⁷ Ibid., 157.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 170. See also, Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p.11.
- ³⁹ Ibid., pp. 154-155
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 161
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 169
- ⁴² Willis, Maseno, June 24, 1909, In *Willis Papers*, 226.
- ⁴³ R. Machpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya*, 52
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid. see also, Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p.12
- ⁴⁶ Ibid. see also, Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p.12
- ⁴⁷ M. G. Capon, *Towards Unity in Kenya*, p.12. This includes a quotation of a November, 1910 Resolution by a CMS committee in England.
- ⁴⁸ G. H Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, p. 182.

keeping up with contemporary Africa . . .

BookNotes for Africa

BookNotes for Africa is a twice-yearly specialist journal offering reviews of recent Africa-related publications relevant for informed Christian reflection in Africa.

Each issue of *BookNotes for Africa* contains 40+ one-paragraph evaluative reviews of titles selected especially for likely interest to theological educators and libraries in Africa and worldwide.

Now in its ninth year of publication, *BookNotes for Africa* has already provided learned reviews for more than 500 recent Africa-related titles. The journal thus represents a uniquely handy, affordable means of keeping current with contemporary Christian reflection in Africa.

BookNotes for Africa is jointly sponsored by distinguished theological colleges in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Reviews are provided by a team of contributors drawn from throughout the continent and overseas. A simple mode of production enables modest subscription rates for the intended readership.

Subscriptions are organised on a 2-year cycle (4 issues), with airmail posting included. For addresses within Africa the rate for 2 years is US\$8; for addresses overseas the rate is US\$12. Back issues are available at \$3 a copy in Africa, and \$4 a copy overseas. Cheques should be drawn on a US bank, and made payable to "BookNotes for Africa" (or you may propose a practicable alternative). Send all inquiries and subscription orders to: *BookNotes for Africa*, PO Box 250100, Ndola, Zambia.

The Christian God and Human Authority: A Theological Exploration with Reference to Africa's Principal Worldviews¹

Benno van den Toren,

1. Addressing the African Crisis of Traditional and Modern Authorities

From all sides we hear that the authorities of sub-Saharan Africa are involved in deep crisis. Traditional authorities are rapidly losing influence; while at the same time newly imported forms of authority oscillate between powerlessness and power-abuse. Despite international pressure towards democratisation, governments exercise their power along authoritarian and sometimes dictatorial patterns. In order to gain the international respectability they need, they tend to accept democracy, but only in as far as they are forced, as little as possible and without any real conviction. Yet, their authoritarian behaviour is only equalled by their inability to influence what is going on in their vast territories, which lack adequate governmental structures. In the experience of many, nothing is functioning as it used to; yet, no clear or stable alternative is emerging.

The churches are working hard to offer a positive contribution and to address the questions their governments are facing (i.e. Bediako '95; J.K.N. Mugambi (ed.) '97). Yet, with regards to their own structures of authority the churches are as much a part of the crisis as are the other authorities, both in the lack and the abuse of authority (Messi Metogo '97, 171s, 212s).

Complaints about the lack and the abuse of authority are of course ageless, but the political and ecclesiastical realities of contemporary Africa

Dr. Benno van den Toren is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Bangui Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (BEST) in the Central African Republic.

¹ This article previously appeared in the journal *Exchange* 30 (2001) pages 235-255, and is reprinted here by permission.

justify speaking of a genuine crisis. In this situation it is natural to search for healthy examples. Africans can look with nostalgia to their pre-colonial past, in which human relationships were so much clearer. Africans south of the Sahara can look to the North, where Muslim governments and societies appear more stable. If we did not see this ourselves, Muslim propaganda will tell those not yet in their sphere of influence about the goodness of Islamic law. The West of course remains a major attraction for Africans, both for its affluence and its peace. If Africans themselves are not attracted to the western way of organising society, the West will impose itself both through western controlled international organisations and through its media and economic power. Along side these three major spheres of influence in contemporary Africa, namely tradition, Islam and (post)modernity,² Christianity is also a major force, with deep roots in Africa's past and its vibrant recent history.

Christians have a unique understanding of authority, grounded in their unique understanding of God as they have met Him in Jesus Christ. The thesis of this article is that starting from their knowledge of God, Christians have a unique and healthy contribution to make in addressing the African crisis of authority. As a Christian serving for some time on this continent and participating in its life, I want to contribute my part. This basic idea, that a Christian understanding and practice of authority follows from a Christian understanding of God, can be argued for in at least three ways.

- (1) First of all, this relationship is fundamental to *biblical theology*. The two Testaments consider the imitation of God and Jesus Christ to be a central criterion for knowing how to live according to the will of God, and a decisive motivation to live accordingly (Lev 19:2-4; Mk 19:43-45; Jn 15:12; Eph 5:1; Grenz '97, 100, 114-117; Kaiser '83, 29s). In the same way, the Scriptures consider the "renewal of our minds" a key to the renewal of our lives and communities. Only if we start viewing things in the right way, in the light of God's character, purpose and redemptive actions, will we be able to discover the will of God for our lives and communities and to live accordingly (Ro 12:2; Php 1:9s).

² Despite major differences between modernity and postmodernity, in this paper I discuss them together, because in comparison to the other worldviews discussed in this paper they clearly stem from the same root, as is shown particularly in their conceptions of authority. "Postmodernism retains a number of elements that characterised modernism: ... It repudiates all external, objective, transcendent authority" (Henry '95, 48).

- (2) From the perspective of *cultural anthropology*, research has revealed a close relationship between the morality of a particular culture and its worldview (Geertz '93; Kraft '96, 419). We will see that this relationship is not unique to Christianity; the worldviews and theologies of African Traditional Religion, Islam and (post)modernity equally correspond to their respective understanding and practice of authority.
- (3) From the perspective of *systematic analysis*, the relationship between authority and worldview is seen from both ends of the relationship. A worldview as a comprehensive perspective on reality encompasses basic beliefs concerning what is ultimately good, concerning the nature of evil and concerning the ultimate goal of history. These beliefs have direct implications for the understanding of what are considered worthy and healthy goals of action and valuable and healthy social structures.³ On the other hand, if authority should be distinguished from the exercise of brute force, it needs to search for a legitimisation outside itself in the way things are supposed to be. Even the idea that authority is based on a democratic consensus of free individuals presupposes a certain worldview.

This article aims first of all to uncover the internal structure and particular logic of the Christian understanding of authority by linking it to its source in the Christian doctrine of God and his relationship to humanity. As such it necessarily abstracts from the great historical variety in the Christian practice of authority, which has been influenced by many more factors, historical, cultural and social, rather than by the Christian concept of God alone. Yet, the fact that the Christian concept of God is and should be a major determinant of the Christian practice of authority legitimises this abstraction. Secondly, this specific Christian understanding will be compared with concepts of God and authority in African Traditional Religion, Islam and (post)modernism, for it is these three worldviews, together with the Christianity, that are competing for the African mind, the African soul and African society. With regard to these worldviews we will for the same reasons concentrate more on their internal structure and logic than on the variety of historical expressions.

³ Following authors like MacIntyre ('85²) and O'Donovan ('86), this statement goes against the grain of a strong a priori of many contemporary ethicists that you can never derive an "ought" from an "is".

Understanding the way in which the conception of authority and the doctrine of God are related will be of value in the four following areas.

- (1) The first gain is *hermeneutical*. If we understand the coherence of God's character and the divine ideal for the practice of authority, we will be better equipped for understanding and interpreting the great variety of biblical passages touching on authority. Understanding the inner logic of the Christian understanding of authority will help us view the variety and richness of the biblical data as referring to and sprouting from one and the same divine character and will. This hermeneutical perspective will also help us to apply and live the message shining through this variety of biblical expressions.
- (2) The second gain is *contextual*. The contextualisation of the biblical message does not only concern the highlighting of the continuities between Christian ideas and those found elsewhere. It should also point out the particularity of Christian ideas and ideals and their discontinuity with what is found in the context in which it is lived and proclaimed. In the African context the particularity of a Christian understanding of authority should especially be shown in comparison with the conceptions of African Traditional Religion, Islam and (post)modernism. The difference of the Christian conception and practice of authority in comparison to "the authorities, principalities and powers of this age" needs to become clear, in order that the Christian gospel can really set us free from these other authorities.⁴
- (3) The third gain of unravelling the relationship between the Christian God and the Christian practice of authority is *apologetical*. If we understand this relationship, we will understand the corresponding comprehension of authority to be well founded as following from our belief in God.
- (4) For the same reason, tracing the Christian understanding of authority back to the Christian revelation of God is highly *motivational* for Christians. Can we conceive of a better motivation to practice what we believe to be a Christian understanding of authority, than the knowledge that this practice imitates God Himself and is the only adequate response to Him as we know Him in Christ?

⁴ The importance of the Pauline language concerning "principalities", "powers", "dominions" and "authorities" has been shown by authors like Walter Wink ('84) and Lesslie Newbigin ('89, 198ss) to be talking at the same time about spiritual powers and social structures and ideas that hold human beings asunder.

To understand the uniqueness of the Christian understanding of authority we will first of all turn to the Scriptures from which we will show how the biblical conception and practice of authority differed from its environment and specifically so because of its particular understanding of God. We will see how the radical distinction between the Creator and his creation proper to the Judeo-Christian Scriptures results in the desacralisation and relativisation of all human authority.

In the second section this biblical idea will form the starting point for a comparison with and a critique of the traditional African conceptions of authority, which tend to consider human authorities as sacred and therefore absolute and incontestable.

The comparison in the third major section concentrates on modern and postmodern conceptions of authority. These positions are completely opposite to the traditional African ideas. That is, in the name of human autonomy, all authorities are not only desacralised, but completely separated from any idea of a divine justice and order. From a Christian perspective such isolation of human authority is destructive to human community and life itself.

In comparison to the traditional African conception on the one hand and the (post)modern conception on the other hand, the Muslim theology and practice of authority resembles most closely the Christian understanding. Nevertheless, in the fourth section we will show that both religious traditions have radically different conceptions of God and that it is exactly from their different doctrines of God that the differences in their ideals and actual practices of authority can be understood.

I end with some concluding observations, showing how the revelation of the character of God in Christ has profound implications for the way in which we exercise authority. As in many other areas, the Christian practice of authority may help us experiment and should help us show the liberating power of the Gospel in relation to all sorts of oppressive human authorities.

2. The Absolute Distinction between God and Humanity according to the Scriptures and the Subsequent Desacralisation of all Human Authorities

One of the decisive points that distinguished the biblical faith from the surrounding world was the way in which it conceived of the one God, Yahweh, as the Creator of the universe. According to the myths of the peoples surrounding Israel (for example the Egyptians and the Babylonians) the origin of the cosmos was described as a “cosmogony”. This is the type of myth in which the sea, the earth, the heavens, human beings and the gods all originate from one and the same original substance, which they continue to share (van Leeuwen '64, 55s). The Bible, in contrast, considers God to be absolutely distinct from creation, including human beings. While God is eternal and exists by Himself, the world is created out of nothing by the word of God and therefore has no other origin than the will of God (Ge 1:1-3; Jn 1:3). This distinction implies an absolute sovereignty of God over against his creation (Isa 45:9).

The Dutch missiologist and theologian Arend van Leeuwen has shown that the contrast between these two worldviews had profound implications for the corresponding conceptions of political authority. In the Ancient Near East, political authority was considered sacred. In Egypt the Pharaoh was thought to be the incarnation of the divine sun god Re. Among the Babylonians the king was not divine himself, but he was the direct representative of the gods⁵ and he had an important cultic function in maintaining the cosmic order to which both men and the gods belonged. Because of the sacred character of his kingship and his indispensability for the maintenance of cosmic harmony, this political authority could never be seriously criticised. It was extremely difficult to displace a malfunctioning sovereign and if it did happen he would be exchanged for a member of his extended family. The people never questioned the legitimacy of the authority of the monarch as such, for this was an indispensable part of the sacred and necessary cosmic order (van Leeuwen '64, 82ss).

In Israel, however, the establishment of a monarchy was far from evident, as is shown by the argument between Samuel and the Israelites concerning the possibility and the desirability of this institution. The people

⁵ As such the king both in Babylon and Egypt was often called the “image of God”, an expression which in the Hebrew Scriptures is applied to all men, male and female, without distinction (Blocher '84, 86s).

wished to have a king “like all the nations” (1Sa 8:5), but this request is considered an insult to the God of Israel, who is its one and only King (1Sa 8:8). Samuel explained that even if God gave them a king, this king should not be like the pagan kings. As Samuel underlined, this king would not be above criticism. The king should obey his God, who remains the only one who is King by nature, and if the earthly representative did not obey, he would be judged like his people (1Sa 12:14s, 25). This desacralisation of political authority had important implications for the attitude towards the king as we encounter it in the Old Testament. Against the tendency among the kings to usurp cultic functions, the prophets and the priests would make constant efforts to guard their independence as representatives of God vis-à-vis the monarchy. When Saul immolated a sacrifice in order to gain the favour of God for his battle against the Philistines, this was a major reason for God rejecting his kinship (1Sa 13:8-14). The king Jeroboam was condemned for the installation of two cultic centres at Dan and Bethel, meant to be a cult to the God of Israel they had served before, but a cult that would support the reign of Jeroboam (1Ki 12:26-13:10). For the author of the books of Kings the expression “the sins of Jeroboam” was precisely used to indicate this cult in Dan and Bethel linked to the northern monarchy. It was the main criterion for judging the kings coming after him (f. ex. 2Ki 10:31; 13:6).

Prophecy was not a phenomenon limited to Israel, but the prophets in the surrounding countries were by and large prophets of the royal courts, as you could also find diviners and astrologers in the royal entourage (cf. Ge 41:18; 1Ki 18:19; Jer 27:3, 9 Da 2:2; 4:15; 5:7). The Israelite kings also had their court-prophets, but the writers of the Old Testament knew too well that court-prophets would have no inclination to criticise their kings. These prophets would naturally give mainly messages which would please their masters and benefactors (1Ki 22:5-28; Jer 23:9-40; cf. Goldingay '94, 47-57). In distinction from these court-prophets there was a long tradition of independent prophets, who had the courage to criticise the authorities even at the risk of their lives. Elijah, Amos and Jeremiah are impressive examples of prophets who challenged the sacred character of the authority the kings liked to usurp. These prophets demanded that their kings obey the laws of the only sovereign God and use their authority for the benefit of their people. It is the messages of the prophets of this tradition, which were incorporated in the biblical canon, and it is these prophets we believe to be the mouth of God the Creator.

In the New Testament we find the same desacralisation of human authorities. If there is only one God and if Jesus is proclaimed as the only Lord (2Co 8:5s), this implies intrinsically a criticism of all the others who call themselves god or lord, including the Roman emperor himself. As the pagan kings in the Ancient Near East had done, the Roman emperors had begun to demand that they be worshipped as gods and so to declare their authority sacred, absolute and incontestable. It was precisely because of the refusal of the early Christians to worship the emperor as god, that they were persecuted (cf. Plinius, *Letters*, X, 96). All of the subjects of the Roman Empire were allowed to have their own gods. The only condition was that they would not because of that refuse to participate in the imperial cult, for such a refusal was considered an expression of civil disobedience. The early Christian Apologists made a serious effort to show that Christians were respectable citizens (i.e. *The Epistle to Diognetus*). From a Christian perspective they were indeed respectable citizens, but the defenders of the Roman State were right when they considered the Christian refusal to worship the emperor to be a radical assault on his authority! In fact, if the emperor was no longer considered divine and became a human being like all the others under his jurisdiction, he would no longer be above criticism and one could start making him accountable and asking questions about the justness of his government. The Christian refusal to worship the emperor was not simply a religious affair without any further consequences, but a time bomb against all tendencies to sacralise political authorities and to make them absolute and incontestable.

3. Contrast with Traditional African Theology and Practice of Authority

What are the implications of this absolute distinction between the Creator and his creation for the development of a Christian theology and ethics of authority? We have seen that this implies that all human authority becomes relative in relation to the divine authority, which alone is absolute and that consequently all aspirations of authorities to consider themselves absolute falls under the judgement of God.

This has consequences for the evaluation of the view of authority found in African Traditional Religion.⁶ In his illuminating article "Christian

⁶ I presuppose that it is legitimate to speak of "African Traditional Religion" in the singular as a religion, which notwithstanding its varieties is characterised by a common core. See MAGESA '97, 14-18. Van Leeuwen limits himself to drawing

Religion and African Social Norms: Authority, Desacralisation and Democracy”, the Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako draws our attention to the fact that as in the Ancient Near East, political authority in traditional Africa was equally considered sacred, absolute and therefore incontestable (Bediako '95, 239-242). Even if a considerable number of theologians, as among others John Mbiti (Mbiti '69, 29-47; Mbiti '92², 45-59) consider African Traditional Religion to be monotheist, the line of separation between what is divine and what is not is not clear-cut. Between the one creator and humanity there exists a host of intermediaries, who are more or less close to the creator, more or less divine and more or less sacred. This function of the intermediary is also fulfilled by certain human personalities, who because of their privileged relationship with the spirit world are themselves considered sacred. The clan-chiefs and other political authorities enter in this category (Mbiti '69, 182). This sacredness of the chief was reinforced by another dominant trait of the traditional African worldview and morality. According to traditional morality a crucial requirement for the good life was to live in harmony with the whole universe, visible and invisible, and in particular in harmony with the ancestors, which were considered the guardians of the security, the fecundity and the prosperity of the clan (Magesa '97, 46-57). The authority of the chief was based on his privileged relationship with the most important ancestors of the clan and therefore almost incontestable (Bediako '95, 241s; cf. Magesa '97, 69, 245s, 252, 266). The difficulty of replacing someone occupying this crucial place in the universe of mystical relations is shown by the example of the Nyoro of Uganda, where a failing king could only be replaced by another if he either committed suicide or was killed (Magesa '97, 257). Placide Tempels expressed classically:

The eldest of a group or of a clan is, for Bantu, by Divine law the sustaining link of life, binding ancestors and their descendants. [...] The true chief [...] is the source of zestful living, he is God himself.” (Tempels '59, 62s)

The novel *Waiting for Rain* by Charles Mungoshi from Zimbabwe ('75) shows how the relationship with the ancestors renders authority effectively incontestable, in this case on the level of the extended family. Lucifer, the main character of the novel, returns to his natal village after his studies, only to depart anew for further studies and this time in Europe.

out illuminating parallels between the Ancient Near East and contemporary conceptions of authority related to the great religions of East.

During this visit many conflicts develop and they all converge in a seance in which an aunt of the family functions as a medium to ask for the guidance of the ancestors. You sense that after the ancestors have spoken, there is no possibility for disagreement, except if one wants to pay the price of placing oneself entirely outside the community. A further penalty is added in the form of a bad conscience for having disrupted the harmony of the family and for having called terrible maledictions on them. The appeal to the ancestors, whether it be done honestly or as manipulation, effectively renders human authority almost absolute and incontestable.

For Bediako the sacredness and incontestability of authority is not only in Africa's past, but accompanies the African understanding today. According to his analysis one of the main causes of the difficulty African leaders and their entourage have in ceding power to a successor is precisely this sentiment related to authority. Because authority is considered sacred, it can not be given up when acquired, unless by force or major constraint (Bediako '95, 236s, 242). The behaviour of many African presidents supports this thesis.⁷ We could equally point to the view and practice of authority as we encounter it in many African churches. As soon as someone becomes a pastor, an elder or a president of a denomination or para-church organisation, this person tends to consider this position as a given, an incontestable attainment. It become difficult to accept criticism of ones functioning and even more to understand that one is not pastor of a certain church, elder or president for life, but that at a certain time it is good to leave one's place to another. Far too often the exercise of the mission of the church and the work of our Lord is hindered because one finds leaders who can no longer accept good council, or understand that at a certain time they can leave their post to others without being ashamed.

With regard to the retarding or even the blocking of the development of African democracy, society and economy through the tendency to render political authorities absolute, Bediako considers the proclamation of the

⁷ Lamin Sanneh attributes the tendency of African politics to render political authority absolute to the influence of Western ideas on the absolute authority of the state, which the African elite adopted under the influence of colonialism, which made "these elites [...] ineffective modernist brokers to their people" (Sanneh '96, 86). While this may be one factor among others, because of the "relatively superficial nature of the assimilation of these new African elites" noted by Sanneh himself (*ibid.*), it is difficult to conceive this influence as more important than the African heritage itself.

Gospel an indispensable contribution for escaping from this blind alley. It is the Christian faith that will desacralise human authority in relationship to the absolute authority belonging to God alone. Only when we begin to understand that all human authority is relative can democracy make progress in Africa, according to Bediako, for democracy presupposes that political authorities can be criticised and replaced, an idea which has been difficult to accept by Africans until today (Bediako '95, 243-249). The church does not need to defend democracy as the only ethical form of government, to make clear how other forms of government need the corrective of the desacralisation of authority. In Ancient Israel it was the monarchy, which was desacralised, and the same prophetic witness needs to be heard today if governments are democratically elected or not. Without the church imposing itself in the area of politics in which she is not specialised, she can make an extremely important contribution by reminding the leaders of the nations that they are human beings like all of us. She should remind them that they are accountable to the one and only God and to their fellow human beings for the way they exercise their authority and that they can, when the time comes, make place for others.

For this reminder by the church to the political leaders to have any weight, we must start with the desacralisation of the ecclesiastical authorities themselves. Being a religious authority does not make church authorities an exception to the rule of all human authority being relative. If there is something sacred, it is shared by all believers who share in the universal priesthood (1Pe 2:9). Church leaders and pastors do not have a privileged access to God, as the former chiefs and priests were considered having in relation to the spirit-world, nor a privileged access to the Word of God. It is therefore that church-leaders are not only accountable to God, but also to the body of Christ consisting of all believers, even if this idea does not come naturally because of the living African past. This does not make the church a democracy, ruled by autonomous individuals. The Church is ruled by the Word. But the decisive discovery of the protestant Reformation is still valuable: the Word of God is given to all believers and not only to those ordained in special ministries. If the authority in the Church is a functional division rather than an ontological distinction between people, those in power can no longer consider their functions as rights for life.

It is worth noting that the African tradition is not only a burden in certain respects, but also a treasure in other respects. In the African tradition there have been two ways of considering and practising authority,

two lines which were almost always found together with sometimes the accent falling more to one side, sometimes more to the other. Next to the view of absolute and incontestable authority and sometimes in tension with this view, there are also community-based and egalitarian elements in the understanding and practice of authority. There was the practice in which major sectors of the community participated in the palavers aimed at consensual decisions to which the whole community could assent.⁸ Because of its concern for the maintaining of community, practices were elaborated to search for reconciliation, when the community was disrupted (i.e. Magesa '97, 269ss). These lines of the African tradition could be explored, reoriented, supported and reinforced from a Christian perspective of authority.⁹ The wisdom developed in the practice of the search for such a consensus can enrich us today and not only in Africa.

4. Contrast with (Post)Modern "Theology" and Practice of Authority

Contemporary Africa is no longer the Africa of 80, 40 or even 20 years ago. In order to understand and respond to the problems relating to the practice of authority in Africa today, we cannot limit ourselves to an analysis of Africans past, nor wish to enclose Africa in its past, as certain anthropologists seem to prefer.¹⁰ Today's Africa is in a process of radical change through its confrontation with the cultural influences from the West or more precisely the North-Atlantic culture. This culture we may call "modernity", but we also need to reckon with influences more properly labelled "postmodern". I need to limit myself to a few sketchy remarks.

Modernity is mostly used as the label for the culture developed in Europe since the 18th century Enlightenment period. It is characterised by a strong belief in the autonomy of the human subject. As the human being is

⁸ Cf. Magesa '97, 267: "Throughout Africa generally, the moral legitimation of government and leadership depends to a large extent on the capacity of the leader(s) to listen. The enforcement of law and social order is basically an exercise in listening and must be seen within this context."

⁹ This remains true, even when we realise that without the introduction of the desacralisation of authority a consensus can be forced and can be based on a suppression of dissent, as noted by Bediako ('95, 236-238).

¹⁰ See Messi Metogo '97, 193s for a wider criticism of this tendency to limit Africa to its past.

no longer prepared to accept any authority above himself,¹¹ atheism is a natural child of modernity (cf. Avis '95). The modern concept of authority therefore generally left no place for an absolute divine authority limiting the human being. When it continued to accept a god, it generally adapted an image of god, which did not imply a limitation or relativisation of human autonomy.¹² In modernity itself human autonomy was, however, considered limited in a certain way because it was structured by a natural ethics, to be discovered by natural and autonomous reason, which determined what was good and just. However, in time this idea of being able to find a natural ethic by reason alone without the help of divine revelation proved to be more and more an illusion. The rejection of biblical revelation by autonomous reason ended therefore in the renunciation of all hope to find a universal moral structure to reality and a universally valid natural ethic. In this way modernity is nowadays followed by new developments that we call post-modern (Lyotard '84; Middleton & Walsh '95; Grenz '95). The idea of human autonomy is generally maintained, but in this new setting there is no longer any metaphysical limit to the authority and liberty that the individual appropriates. Happily there are many values we share in our post-modern society, but we accept them because of our common history and because we need them to manage our communities, but not because of any metaphysical order, which earlier was supposed to encompass our individual lives.

The influence of these ideas in Africa is evident. Traditionally the radius of human action in authority and under authority was strictly limited by the perception of the universe. Reality was conceived to have a fixed structure, in which humanity and the non-human, those in authority and those under authority, the visible and the invisible all participated and which gave the human being his due place. Today in many areas of life and particularly in the in the quest for personal gain and in the exercise of authority there are few limitations left, particularly for Africans living in a modern urban setting and particularly for those who dominate. As a consequence the exercise of authority not constrained by any transcendent legitimising and critical structure easily tends to be reduced to a question of

¹¹ Here the masculine pronoun is in place, for the autonomous thinking and mastering subject of the Enlightenment has strongly masculine characteristics.

¹² Karl Barth's concept of the "*Verbürgerlichung*", the "becoming bourgeois", or the domestication of the Gospel by modern culture is in this respect a revealing analytical tool (Barth '57, §26.2).

sheer power. Where many western authorities feel constrained by the values developed in western history as for example those related to human rights and social concern, we should not be wondered that many African authorities did not deeply interiorise this strain of the western cultural tradition. The West they encountered generally was not one of human equality and social concern. All this leaves us with the outcome that in Africa the influence of the destabilising strands of modernity and post-modernity on the structures of authority has been much stronger than in the West itself.

This concept of authority without limits in the structures of reality is, however, far from biblical. Life, according to the Old Testament, is structured by an order established by God the Creator Himself. God created the universe according to his will and living in accordance with this structure is beneficial for the individual, for the community and for non-human creation (Dt 32:47; O'Donovan '86, 188-190). Where modern African leaders opt for a liberty from all moral structures that might "define" (and thus limit) their authority, the church needs to show that such an exercise of power is inhuman and self-destructive. The church further needs to follow the prophets in speaking up for the weakest in society like the single mothers and their families, who are most easily forgotten when authority and power become confounded. We need to have the courage to proclaim the Gospel, which also implies that recognition of God's supreme authority and his will for his creation is beneficial and sets us free for a better life (O'Donovan '86, 151-156). The ministry of the church is not only to desacralise authorities that declare themselves sacred. She should also show the need for human authorities to recognise the supreme authority of God and his will for his creation and even the need to recognise human authorities established by Him.

5. Contrast with Islamic theology and practice of authority

The growing influence of Islam in Africa implies that we also need to consider what is proper to the Christian understanding of authority in comparison to the Muslim understanding. This comparison is particularly necessary because of the growing influence of Islam, often in its more militant forms, in African countries with a strong Christian presence, like Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Malawi. In these situations the easiest reaction would be to follow Muslim examples of ways to defend one's rights and maybe to impose one's will. Should the following of Islamic practice of

propagating, defending and imposing its authority be considered a legitimate answer or rather a temptation?

At first sight the Islamic and Christian concepts of authority have much in common. If we do not see this by taking Western secular understandings of authority, political and other, as Christian, we will have no sound basis for dialogue, collaboration and if necessary resistance (cf. Sanneh '96, 113). For both religions all human authority is relative with regards to the only absolute authority as the prerogative of the sovereign God (*Koran*, Sura VII, 54). In the *Sunna*, the tradition, one finds a saying of Mohammed that shows the possibility of criticising the human authorities now rendered relative: "The best holy war is the word of truth spoken to an unjust ruler." (Ghazali '94, 199) Although Christians tend to distinguish more than Muslims between the religious community and the state, both religions agree that the will of God is normative for all of life. Neither Muslims, nor Christians distinguish in that respect between the society in general and religious institutions, because for both God is the Creator and Sovereign over the entire universe.

However, one can still perceive a general difference in the practice of authority between predominantly Muslim countries on the one hand and countries with a more Christian population on the other hand. The political ideals of Muslim groups and Christian groups reveal important differences and this remains true even if one recognises the great variety within both religious traditions. In general, Muslim religious and political leaders have more of a tendency to aim at the imposition of Islam and Islamic law and to confound political and religious authority, whereas Christians tend more to separate church and state and to promote religious freedom. Are these differences simply due to non-religious cultural influences? This is suggested by the fact that most European states before the 18th century had the same tendency not to respect religious freedom nor the distinction between the proper spheres of church and state. At the same time a number of Muslims living in Europe and inhaling its atmosphere are opting now for the occidental model of organising religious groups in a pluralist society.¹³ Moreover, it would be all too unjust to compare a Christian ideal with the

¹³ The varieties in the Islamic world community are even greater: Muslims in societies with a "primal" religious background, as in Africa, may tend more to a sacralisation of human authorities, while Muslims in some Asian countries may tend to a more mystical and personalised Islam.

reality of lived Islam and then to conclude that the Christian ideal is preferable. In both religious traditions we find laudable ideals and corrupt practices, which contradict these ideals. Does this mean that finally different practices of authority in these two religions have no other roots than social, cultural and historical ones? My contention is that there are traits of the two different conceptions of God and religion that suggest that at least in part these cultural differences and these differing conceptions of authority have religious roots. It is these religious roots that adherents of both traditions will want to treat with utter seriousness, because of their common recognition that our understanding of the nature of God and of his relationship to humanity should be foundational and normative for our understanding of human living. It seems to me that the Christian understanding of the nature of God and the Christian life contains more elements that can nourish a sound and liberating theology and practice of authority, than the other tradition. In this respect there are at least five considerations worth our attention.

First, there is the separation of political and religious authority. Even if Moses combined both domains of authority in one and the same person, the biblical tradition shows how later on the prophets and often even the priests needed to take an independent stand vis-à-vis the monarchy. The Koranic canon culminates in and ends with the concentration of all power, political and religious, in the hands of Mohammed. This difference is of course normative for both religious traditions.

But we can take a further step. Secondly, this difference is not simply an historical contingency, but is also related to two different conceptions of the relation between the religious and the political spheres of life. In Islamic theology it is difficult to conceive of a fundamental difference between the two spheres. The religious community and the political authority both have the responsibility to promote obedience to Allah, the sovereign King of the universe. In the Christian tradition, particularly in its Protestant forms, a distinction was made between two different functions of these two different structures, the church and the state. Developing Romans 13, which gives to the state the so-called "power of the sword" to punish wrongdoers, the state, also the Christian state, was assigned the responsibility to maintain social justice and order by making an effort *to contain and to limit evil*. In this view the state is an emergency structure,

provoked by the reality of sin.¹⁴ Yet, in punishing evil, one can contain evil and limit its growth, but one can never *overcome* it in that way. We can only overcome evil in responding to evil with good and by blessing those who curse us (Ro 12:20s). This is exactly the lifestyle promoted by the church as followers of the example of Jesus himself. If this is the only way to *overcome* evil, we need in this age at the same time a structure to *contain* evil, for otherwise evil could propagate itself unhindered. The idea and ideal that in our love for our neighbour we should be prepared to suffer unjustly in order to overcome evil is central to the New Testament. This idea is absent and even hardly conceivable in Islam.

In the third place we should also note that the difference between the two religions uncovered thus far is linked with and based upon a more fundamental difference between the two conceptions of God and his relationship with human beings. As we know, the basic metaphor to express the relationship between the God of the Koran and human beings is the relationship between a master and his slaves or a sovereign king and his subjects. Islam is the religion of total submission to the will of Allah, whom all men should obey as his slaves or servants. The word "Islam" itself refers to this submission, a "Muslim" being someone who submits himself.¹⁵ The key metaphor to understanding the relationship between the God of the Bible and human beings, however, is the relationship between a father and his children, a relationship between a husband and his spouse or a relationship between friends. It is true that this God also has the *right* to our service as his slaves (Lk 17:10), yet his aim is that we live as his sons and daughters (Gal 4:7), as friends (Jn 15:15) and as his bride (Rev 19:7). What concerns us here is a major difference between these two sets of relationships. A king or a master may force the obedience of their subjects

¹⁴ See for example *The Westminster Confession* XXIII.

¹⁵ In the *Koran* itself "Islam" is used as the name of the religion proclaimed by Mohammed (Sura III, 17; V, 5). The translation of Islam as "submission" is dominant among Muslims (Sherif '95, 117s; du Pasquier, 18; Kateregga & Shenk '80, 59; cf. Sourdel '96, 407). Others also translate it as "total surrender to God" (Gardet & Jornier, "Islam", 171b). This, however, does not change a lot in the perception of the relationship between God and man as explained by the basic Koranic metaphors for God of King, Lord and Master. It is true that even from early on a more mystical interpretation of the Koran developed, giving another meaning to Islam as "surrender". From a Christian perspective this may be conceived a positive development, but its origins in the *Koran* seem to me too limited to interpret orthodox Islam from this perspective.

or slaves. A father, however, can never force the love of his children, as Jesus' parable of the prodigal son shows, when that father accepts the painful departure of his son (Lk 15:11ss). A husband can never force the love of his spouse, as the prophet Hosea experienced, when he had to marry an unfaithful wife, who left him, thus modelling the love of God for a people rejecting him (Hos 1 & 2). We can never force others to be our friends, no matter how much we would like. In these situations love can be shown and offered, but the response necessarily remains free.

The fact that a master through his faithful servants can force the obedience and service of the unfaithful seems to me to imply that the *jihad*, the holy war, is a concept, which naturally relates to it. Certain modern Muslims, e.g. Badru Kateregga from Uganda, wish to eliminate the idea of a holy war (Kateregga & Shenk '80, 76s). This is a laudable effort, which can be supported by the Koranic verse: "No compulsion is there in religion" (Sura II, 256). Yet, the idea that there is no compulsion in religion, though true, seems to me incoherent with more fundamental lines of the Koranic understanding of religion. If the other servants do not obey, obedience to the master naturally implies that one tries to force others to obey. The question as to whether the obedience is wholehearted or enforced is not unimportant, but it is secondary. They remain servants and nothing more. It is natural that a good Muslim will try to promote obedience to Allah with all possible means, through the *jihad* of the word, but equally through the *jihad* by military, political or economic power. (Djaber Eldjazaïri '85, 367s; Sura VIII, 39). If the Christian envisages to the contrary that all human beings love God as children, friends and as a spouse does, they can never force this love, neither physically, nor economically, nor psychologically. They can only use the means God himself preferred for this goal: the word, persuasion, the manifestation of love itself, patiently waiting (Mt 21:33-40; 23:37). If we consider that the responsibility of the Christian state is to contain and limit evil, it can deploy force for this specific and limited purpose. If it is the vocation of the church to invite everyone to enter the Kingdom of God and to become his children, his friends and his bride, the church "only" has the power of the Word and the Spirit. She constantly needs to avoid that even her use of words becomes coercive and manipulative propaganda. She can use money to show the love of God, but never to buy conversions.

A fourth difference between the Islamic and Christian religious conceptions with profound implications for the understanding of human

authority is closely related to the one just developed. In both religions the justice of God is the guarantee for justice on earth and therefore also the norm for all human authority, but both religions have a markedly different understanding of the *love* of God. If Allah loves, it is a love for those who obey him (Sura II, 3; Kateregga & Shenk '80, 5). It is not possible to say that Allah *is* love, as one says of the God of the Christian Scriptures, for Allah does not love in all his relationships. He does not love idolaters. The God of the Bible *is* love (1Jn 4:8). He so loved the sinful world, that He gave his only Son to save this world (Jn 3:16). He loved us when we were still his enemies (Ro 5:8-10). His love is one, which searches what is lost (Lk 15). His love is one that suffers when rejected (Ge 6:6; Hos 11:7s; Lk 15:12). His love is a sacrificial love, that gives oneself in order to save, as God showed us supremely in the cross of Christ, which as the cross of his Son is also his own cross. It is the cross of God himself, for the suffering of the Son does not leave the Father unaffected. If God suffered in Christ to save us, to show his glory and to establish his kingly authority, if He humbled himself to search for us and to show his love, this should become the supreme model for all true human authority. This is the most profound reason to exercise authority in both the religious community and in the society at large in humility and service. If a Muslim should be humble before God, the King of the Universe, this might teach him to be humble and obliging before men of great standing. Before those *under* his authority, however, he should behave more like the King of the universe himself, exercising authority justly and compassionately, but without the example of service and humility. How could one ever conceive of Allah as humble and serving? However, if the God of the Bible is humble towards those whom He created and serves those who reject Him, a Christian leader can and should be humble and serve those under his authority, even without necessarily waiting for their respect and obedience as a precondition. These principles are of course more directly applicable to the exercise of authority in the Church, in which we are called to overcome evil by doing well to our enemies. Yet, even in the sphere of the state, which has as its major task to limit evil, such an attitude of love, which has no fear to imitate God in suffering unjustly for the sake of the good, can not be without consequences.

One final and fifth difference at the basis of the two religious conceptions of authority should be noted, even if most of the time this aspect remains beyond conscious perception. Islam and Christianity differ also radically in their understanding of the unity of God. For Muslims, the

unity of God is strict and indivisible; for Christians God's unity is a unity of love of three Persons, who share one and the same divine nature (Manaranche '85). And what is more, in Christian theology, we say that the fact that God is love towards human beings is based in his nature in which He is love in himself before He is love towards us. Recently two theologians, André Manaranche and Colin Gunton, noted that there exists a narrow relationship between a strict conception of the unity of God and an authoritarian understanding and practice of authority (Manaranche '85, 158-164; Gunton '97², 21). Conversely, according to Gunton the doctrine of the Trinity is indispensable for the development of a free and just society (Gunton '97², 168-177). We can of course not suppose a direct parallelism between the three Persons in God and the persons that make up human communities, thus ending up in separating the three divine Persons or diminishing the individuality of separate human beings. Yet God's being personal is the ontological basis of our personal existence and of our life in community as God's image, personality and living in community thus being essential to being human and not a secondary or even a deceptive element of human constitution. According to the Christian understanding, human beings can only be the image of God in community, for God himself lives in an eternal community of three persons related through mutual love (Gunton '97², 83-99). The divine trinity is thus at the foundation of an understanding of human community in which human beings can flourish in communion with others and which is not necessarily hierarchically structured. In Islam, however, the only relationship in which God can be considered the supreme example for human relationships is the relationship between the Creator and the creature, which is a hierarchical relationship in which obedience without reservation is required. Moreover, it is in this hierarchical relationship that the human being is considered to flourish and to reach the goal of his existence. If God's authority should be considered the example of authority in human societies, a hierarchy with authoritarian tendencies is its most natural outflow.

At the end of this section, we can therefore conclude that compared to African Traditional Religion and (post)modernism, Islam in its basic features at first seems to be the most natural ally of the Christian faith with regards to its understanding of authority. Only God retains absolute authority and all human authority is derived from and depends on it. We saw that in accordance with this Mohammed encouraged Muslims to criticise human authorities in the name of God and examples of this criticism can be found in the history of Islam. However, we also saw that

Islam has no religious force comparable to the Christian faith to resist authoritarianism. The Koran does not recognise an independent religious authority over against the Islamic state. This could easily lead to a new sacralisation and absolutisation of political authority, which is at the same time the religious authority. We also saw that theologically Islam can not conceive of two a fundamental difference between the purpose of the authority of the state and the purpose of religious authority.

We discovered how at a more basic level this difference sprang from radical differences in two respective conceptions of God. If Allah is a master to be obeyed, obedience can be forced. If Allah reigns in a totalitarian manner, this is the example given to human authorities, even if it is conceded that according to Islam human beings can never have the same authority as God. If Allah is absolutely on his own in the exercise of his authority, it is this hierarchical relationship which naturally models the practice of human authority. If, on the contrary, God wants the love of human beings, the means indicated for showing and exercising authority are rather the word, persuasion and above all the showing of sacrificial love. Certainly, God is absolutely sovereign and omnipotent and often He needs to impose his will to limit the forces of evil. He has also established social structures for this specific purpose. However, his preference is a different one and it is only in responding to the preferred path of his reign through his word, his Spirit and his love, that human beings can fully flourish and attain their goal. If God humiliated and sacrificed himself in order to save us, this should be the model and the motivation to exercise authority in humility and service. If God himself is a fellowship of three Persons, the human being as his image will rather flourish in non-hierarchical relationships in the human community, which form an image of the divine archetype.

6. Conclusion: A Christian Theology and Practice of Authority, at the Intersection of the Dominant Worldviews of Contemporary Africa

In his *Politics* Aristotle noted already that human conceptions of God or gods tend to reflect the political structures of the society in question: "Wherefore men say that the gods have a king, because they themselves either are or were in ancient times under the rule of a king. For they imagine, not only the forms of the gods, but their ways of life to be like their own." (I,2). In the same way we have seen how the theological ideas and the concepts of authority respectively in Christianity, African

Traditional Religion, Islam and (post)modernity are closely intertwined. This relationship between human authority is in part a consequence of the projection of our human relationships in the sphere of the gods, as in Aristotle's explanation, and in part a consequence of the search for a theological legitimisation of the authorities that be. This parallelism, however, is not necessarily a reason to criticise all theological conceptions as simple projections and legitimatisations, as it is often hastily concluded.¹⁶ Different religions share the conviction that this parallelism is based on the fact that human authorities are derived from divine authority. According to the Christian tradition the parallelism can be abused to legitimise wrongly usurped authority, but God's authority has equally been a constant source, strength and motivation for a perpetual criticism of exactly those abuses of authority. It is true that men tend to make gods according to their own image, but it is equally true that from a Christian perspective this is considered idolatry. Man is rather called to destroy all false images of God and to live according to the image of God as we met Him in Jesus Christ (Ro 8:29; 2Co 3:18). Therefore, the question of the true and healthy exercise of human authority cannot be answered without answering the question of who is the true God and where do we meet Him. This question of course is largely beyond the scope of this article.¹⁷ Here we have limited ourselves to the question of which conception and practice of authority is appropriate for Christians given their convictions about the nature and the revelation of God and the question of how this conception relates to the main African alternatives.

For our understanding and practice of authority to be properly Christian it should grow from a genuinely Christian understanding of God and his relationship to human beings as it has been revealed in the gospel or "good news" of Jesus Christ. Yet, notwithstanding the uniqueness of the Christian conception as a whole, it can form strategic alliances on specific points with the other African worldviews as it seeks to develop and promote a conception of authority that can help respond to the African crisis and clash of authorities. These alliances will be necessary in a continent in which Christianity will always be confronted with two or three of the other worldviews analysed. In comparison with the post modern

¹⁶ The suggestion of projection is for example strong in p'Bitek '68, 77, 112.

¹⁷ We may note, however, that the coherence and the healthiness of the Christian conception of authority following from the Christian conception of God may be used as an indirect indication of the truth of the Christian conviction about the nature of God and that we meet God supremely in Christ.

denial of all fixed moral structure that should guide human behaviour and authority, it joins with African Traditional Religion in its stress of the need to live in harmony with the given order of the universe. We need to live particularly in harmony with the Creator and King of the universe, as Islam has so forcefully underlined. Yet, it joins with Islam and even more with (post)modernism in its desacralisation of all human authorities and in its suspicion of the constant tendency of authorities to absolutise and sacralise themselves. Together with Islam it defends the theocentric character of the universe and the authority of God over all aspects of life, both of what we currently call the religious domain and of what we call the secular domain.

A truly Christian theology and practice of authority, however, can never be an eclectic amalgam of what is found in other conceptions, for it originates from its particular experience of God in Christ. It is here that we find the basis of its unity, its truth, its particularity, its strength and its proper motivation. It is here that Christians in authority in Africa should look for guidance and only from here to what they might learn from their past, from the North or from the West. Here we find a basis for an understanding of authority, which confers different functions to the church and the state, though both under the supreme authority of God. Yet, God, who in his providence has granted structures to contain evil, has also sent Christ who willingly and sacrificially suffered the consequences of evil in order to conquer it. The Christian state can therefore legitimately punish evil, having received the "authority of the sword", while individual Christians are called to pardon without limit (Mt 18:22) and not to resist evil, but to love their enemies (Mt 5:39, 44). In Christ we meet a model of authority, which was recognised by his audience (Mt 7:29) and which was stronger than every resistance (Mt 8:27), yet did not impose itself, but accepted rejection, when the authority of his love and his word could not convince (Mt 26:53s). In Christ we meet a king who wants to reign as a servant and calls us to follow Him by doing the same (Mt 20:25-28). In Christ we meet a God who is love in himself in the unity of the Father and the Son (Mt 11:27), the unity and the love of whom is the origin of creation and of human existence and the ideal for the most fundamental human relationships (Jn 15:9, 12).

It has taken a lot of Christian reflection and wisdom to discover how all this should be lived out in practice, and it will take a lot of wisdom to live it out today in a multi-cultural and multi-religious world. Those questions remain beyond the scope of this article, and some might say that

this article has therefore left the most difficult questions for others to resolve. The aim which I set myself was however more modest from the beginning: to show how a Christian theology and practice of authority is based on the Christian understanding of God and his world, in what respects this understanding differs from the most important competitors in the African market of worldviews, and how Christians therefore have a specific and necessary contribution to make in responding to Africa's current crisis of authorities.

Bibliography

- Aristotle. *Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1921.
- Avis, Paul. *Faith in the Fires of Criticism: Christianity in Modern Thought*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995.
- Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*, II/2: *The Doctrine of God*, part 1, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957.
- Bediako, Kwame. "Christian Religion and African Social Norms: Authority, Desacralisation and Democracy", in: idem, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, (1995), 234-251.
- Blocher, Henri. *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, Leicester: IVP/ Downers Grove: IVP, 1984.
- Djaber Eldjazaïri, Aboubakar, 1985. *La Voie du Musulman*, no publishing house indicated.
The Epistle to Diognetus, .
- J.B. Lightfoot, J.R. Harmer, and Michael W. Holmes, eds. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Leicester: Apollos (IVP) (1989²), 291-306.
- Gardet L., & J. Jomier, "Islam, I Definition and Meaning", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam* IV, 171b-174b, CD-Rom Edition v. 1.0, Leiden: Brill 1999.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Ethos, World View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols", in: idem, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, London: Fontana Press,(1993), 126-141.
- Ghazali. *Le Civisme du musulman: La commanderie du bien et le pourchas du mal*, Paris: Créadif livres, 1994.

Goldingay, John. *God's Prophet, God's Servant: A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994.

Grenz, Stanley J. *A Primer on Postmodernism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

_____. *The Moral Quest: Foundations of Christian Ethics*, Leicester: Apollos (IVP) 1997.

Gunton, Colin. *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997².

Henry, Carl F.H., "Postmodernism: The New Spectre?", in: David S. Dockerey (ed.), *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, Grand Rapids: Baker (1995), 34-52.

Kaiser, Walter C. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Kateregga, Badru D. & David W. Shenk. *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue*, Nairobi: Uzima, 1980.

The Koran: Interpreted, Translated with an Introduction by Arthur J. Arberry, Oxford etc.: Oxford University Press 1964.

Kraft, Charles H. *Anthropology for Christian Witness*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996.

Leeuwen, Arend Th. Van. *Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.

Liotard, Jean Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, London: Duckworth 1985².

Magesa, Laurenti. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Maryknoll: Orbis. 1997

Manaranche, André. *Le Monothéisme chrétien*, Paris: Cerf., 1985.

Mbiti, John S. *African Religions and Philosophy*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1969.

_____. *Introduction to African Religion*, Nairobi, Kampala: East African Educational Publishers, 1992²..

- Messi Metogo, Éloi. Dieu peut-il mourir en Afrique? Essai sur l'indifférence religieuse et l'incroyance en Afrique noire, Paris: Karthala / Yaoundé: UCAC, 1997 .
- Middleton, J. Richard & Brian J. Walsh. *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1995.
- Mugambi, J. K. N. "African Churches in Social Transformation", in: J.K.N. Mugambi (ed.), *Democracy and Development in Africa in Social Transformation*, Nairobi: All Africa Conference of Churches, (1997), 1-36.
- Mungoshi, Charles, *Waiting for the Rain*, London: Heinemann, 1975..
- Newbigin, Lesslie, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK / Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics*, Leicester: IVP / Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1986.
- Pasquier, Roger du. *Découverte de l'Islam*, Geneva: Institut Islamique de Genève, nd.
- P'Bitek, Okot. *Africa Religions in European Scholarship*, Kampala/ Nairobi/ Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1970.
- Pliny, *Letters X*, 96. in: J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to AD 337*, revised with additional documents by W.H.C. Frend, London: SPCK 1987², 18-20.
- Sanneh, Lamin. *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa*, Maryknoll: Orbis 1996.
- Sherif, Faruq. *A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'an*, Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1995.
- Sourdel, Dominique & Janine, *Dictionnaire historique de l'Islam*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996.
- Tempels, Placide. *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959.
- Samuel William Carruthers (ed.) *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, Manchester: Aikman 1937.
- Wink, Walter. *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.

THE IMPACT OF FRIEDRICK FROEBEL ON EDUCATION THROUGH THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Esther J. Kibor*

Introduction

It is true that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries represent a period of most radical changes in educational theory and practice. This was a period known as the “age of reason” or “enlightenment” because rationalism and humanism influenced intellectual life. A shift from traditionalism to the emergence of liberalism proposed many philosophical doctrines and educational practices that culminated in the 20th century (Dupuis 1985, 114). Many questions raised during this period include: What is man? What is truth? What is good? What is education? What is the purpose of school? What should be taught? How should one teach? How should learners be evaluated? and How are freedom and discipline to be harmonized?

In answer to the above questions, many educators have come up with theories that have helped shape the development of education throughout the centuries. Elmer H. Wilds and K. V. Lottich (1961, 291) capture this atmosphere by stating that even in the late eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, while nationalists engaged in organizing educational agencies for the effect of attaining patriotic ideals, thinkers and teachers were concerned with reform of the educational process itself, with the hope of bringing it into accord with the laws of human development.

* Dr. Esther J Kibor is lecturer at Scott theological College, Kenya. She has both an MDiv. (1996) and a Ph.D. in Educational Studies (1999) from Trinity International University, Illinois, USA.

This article examines Friedrich Froebel's theories, contributions and influence upon education. Froebel was a great German educational reformer whose philosophy of education is still alive today even in African countries with the introduction of formal education. The examination takes the form of an interview with an educator with the focus that much can be accomplished from harsh circumstances.

Friedrich Froebel's Background

Interviewer: Mr. Educator, what has drawn you to do studies on Friedrich Froebel? Can you tell us about his background – family life, education and work?

Educator: As an educator, we always enjoy studying great philosophers with aims of finding out what their contributions to society were and the impact of their theories upon our systems of education. We believe there is a lot we can learn from the past in terms of content and methodology. We at times investigate, like in this case, how such studies have influenced a certain period of time. Froebel is known for his kindergarten (a German word for 'garden of children'), the inclusion of manual instruction in school curriculum, and his philosophy of education has emerged as 'an autonomous discipline,' an education that symbolizes the whole fabric of educational systems round the world.

Froebel's background is a study that has captured many educators' interest. He was born on 21st April 1782 at Oberweissbach, a village in the Thuringia, in the mountainous forest of Germany. His father was, in the words of Wilds and Lottich, "an overworked Lutheran pastor in charge of an extensive parish consisting of six or seven villages (1961, 295). His mother died when he was nine months old. At an early age, he was introduced into difficult life situations as his busy father gave him little time. In fact, at that early age, he was left to the care of servants. Later, when his father remarried, the situation grew worse as Froebel was now under the unsympathetic control of a harsh stepmother who invested all her energies in her own natural son.

Quoting from Froebel's autobiography, Robert Ulich (1982, 523-24) writes that the loss of his mother was a hard blow that influenced his whole environment and the development of his being. Christopher Lucas (1972,

403) adds that his childhood was “an exceptionally unhappy one, filled with loneliness and frustrations . . . and poor school performance.” Further, Edgar Knight says, “as a boy in school, he was considered dull, without interest, and with little ability” (1940, 365). The following statement made by Kenneth Gangel and W. Benson (1983, 211) very well captures this scenerio of emotional separation from parents of a child who needs love:

Friedrich was deprived of companionship . . . forced to depend on his own resources [and as a result] he grew melancholy, lonely, shy and introspective and became maladjusted at school, home and society.

The effect of these unpleasant home circumstances, and the deep introspection, made Froebel develop a tendency towards mysticism. He also became moody and subjective. His emotional needs turned him to a love of nature where he found his only companionship.

Interviewer: The father of kindergarten!

Educator: Oh Yes! Despite this, he studied divergent fields of thought. As a youth he was

apprenticed to a forester and acquired a thorough knowledge of plant life and a deep appreciation of nature. His scientific interests took him to the University of Jena, where he enrolled as a student for a brief period until he was forced to withdraw because of financial indebtedness . . . He drifted from occupation to occupation, working as a naturalist and then as a chemist before fixing his attention on educational study and practice. (Gerald Gutek 1995, 257)

Froebel was also greatly influenced by educators of the time. From Jean Rousseau’s works, Froebel was captivated by the concept of nature, goodness and nurturing of the child; from Basedow, on natural methods of teaching; and his own tutor Pestalozzi, on the natural model of education and elementary school practice. He associated with Pestalozzi a lot. He was also attracted to the writings of John Comenius, especially the description of the school of the mother’s knee, which confirmed Froebel’s belief that the earliest years of childhood were the most important in the education of a child.

However, Luella Cole (1950, 507), in describing a history of education, states that the violence of the French Revolution together with the aggressiveness of Napoleon set Europe into a strong reaction against liberalism. It was in this war of liberation that Froebel volunteered as a young soldier for military service. Though this service interrupted his studies, his years as a soldier proved to be of great educational value. The reason for this is twofold: one, Froebel met two men who later became his 'ardent disciples.' Second, his seclusiveness was broken into, as he was forced to be constantly with people. Since he lived in the 19th century, he was greatly influenced by the philosophical idealism and romanticism of the day.

Interviewer: That is a very good description of Froebel's background. It helps us understand him better. From your research, what was it that made him be what he was? What was his philosophy of life, education and pedagogy?

Educator: Froebel's religious beliefs form the basis of his **educational philosophy**. For him, God is at the very core of the universe as well as the core of education. (Reed and Prevost 1993, 252) He asserts that

All existence originates with, and is united in God, the divine and universal presence. All beings comprise an external natural dimension and an internal spiritual dimension and are sustained by the divine energy . . . that is their essence. Since the purpose of existence is to reveal God, it is the person's destiny to become conscious of his/her divine interior essence and to reveal this dynamic inner force through its externalization. (Gutek 1995, 258)

Upon this premise, Froebel's goal of education is stated in terms of a relationship to God. Education consists in "leading man, as a thinking, intelligent being, growing into self-consciousness, to a pure and unsullied, conscious and free representation of the inner law of divine unity, and in teaching him ways and means thereto." (*The Education of Man*, 1899, 2)

For Froebel, natural phenomena makes concrete what is in the mind of God. All existence including human nature is subject to the universal law of development that manifests itself in divine essence. Development occurs when this unfolds according to a prescribed, patterned sequence. Education is the exposure of the divine presence in the universe to the child. This is to

begin in childhood. An early education is important because children by nature are good

Interviewer: If development occurs in a prescribed pattern, what is the role of the teacher?

Educator: Using educational imagery developed from his background as a forester working with seeds, he saw plants develop perfectly from what is already within. Froebel says that the teacher's role is to care and nurture the child in a manner that the child's in-built goodness unfolds and blossoms in a realized potential (Reed & Prevost 1993, 253). As a cooperative agent, the teacher stimulates and encourages the process of unfolding by controlling the growth of the child by enabling him or her to discover internal dimensions through spontaneous and self-initiated activities. For Froebel, education – instruction and training – should be passive rather than prescriptive. While guarding and protecting, the teacher's major obligation is to provide space and time for the child to develop properly according to the laws of nature that are working within.

He sees failure in education as consisting of neglect and prevention of such development, thus distorting the original good human powers and tendencies. (Wilds & Lottich 1961, 302). But for such a growth to develop, the teacher "must study the laws of human development, construct an educational theory that specifies directions in line with the human development, apply these directions and direct education to the realization and actualization of the innate potentialities of the child." (Gangel and Benson 1983,)

He adopted this theory of 'natural goodness' from the writings of Jean Rousseau on the nature of child development. Basic to stages of development is "the doctrine of pre-formation which defines human development as the unfolding of potentialities that are preformed in the person." (Gutek 1995, 258) The unfolding of potentialities has its roots in naturalism where "the aim of education is to help the child learn and develop naturally, free from the corrupting influences of society." (Reed & Prevost 1993, 242)

He rightly states that play is not only the child's medium of learning but also his or her work. Without it there is no development. "A child that plays thoroughly, with self-active determination, perseveringly until physical fatigue forbids, will surely be a thorough, determined . . . [person] capable of self-sacrifice for the promotion of himself and others." (Froebel 1891, 54-55) We all know of cultures that require children to play so as to develop their body muscles. To Froebel, play brought fulfillment to the child's humanity, revealing peace, joy, harmony and contentment within the surrounding. (Gangel & Benson 1983, 214)

Froebel's play materials were two-fold: fixed and symmetrical objects, which he called gifts (e.g. balls, cubes and spheres) and malleable materials, which he rendered occupations (e.g. clay, sand and mud). By manipulating these gifts and occupations, the child would be creative and perceptive. Hence, through "creative self-expression of those inner capacities and abilities the child develops into a fulfilled adult." The implication of this creativity from within is that the teacher may guide, direct and even stimulate the child toward fulfilling certain goals and objectives in learning, but there is no complete instruction until the child is involved in the process of the learning – self-active behaviour.

Interviewer: What educational theories did Froebel develop out of this concept of the child and the teacher?

Educator: In many of his writings, for example, *The Education of Man*, *Pedagogic of the Kindergarten*, *Education by Development*, and *Mother Play and Nursery Songs*, appear his educational theories as follows:

1. Natural development
2. Motor expression
3. Self-expression
4. Self-activity
5. Creativeness and
6. Social participation.

All these are expressed in his *Pedagogic of the Kindergarten*.

Froebel was the first to perceive the significance of socialization as a basic principle in teaching. He exalted the interests and spontaneous

activities of the child. The child as the sole source of educational principles led, and became educated, by developing himself or herself through his own creative activities. Education for Froebel was a constant progressive adjustment of an individual to the world around him by which he discovers his true self. Two principles stand out: one, humankind is nurtured from within; and two, the purpose of instruction is to bring out not to put in.

In this concept of self-activity, an activity is “determined by one’s own interests, sustained by one’s own power and carried to conclusion in an atmosphere of freedom from interference by others.” (Cole 1950, 528)

Interviewer: What did Froebel’s school curriculum look like? What were the objectives of their content?

Educator: On the basis of his observation of nature and stages of human development, Froebel’s curriculum incorporated principles of self-development, activity and socialization, whose content was made up of all types of self-expression activities. The aim was to lead the child into a knowledge of self, human relations, nature and the external world and to God as the divine source and cause of all existence.” (Gutek 1995, 261-62)

Play was at the core of the curriculum, as the most valuable form of self-expression (Wilds & Lottich 1961, 319). For Froebel, this stimulated motor expression, skill, and developed the child’s symbolic, constructive and aesthetic powers.

Froebel’s kindergarten centred around three procedures: use of gifts, singing of his songs and the playing of various educational games. Discussing these in order, the gifts – consisting of geometrical patterns – awakened the child’s power to conceptualize and lead him or her to recognize ultimate truths.

Activities such as modeling, drawing, sewing and coloring (Cole 1950, 530-31) were occupations that enabled the child to act out his or her observations of adult life (Gutek 1995, 262). They also filled and absorbed the child’s mind giving him or her many sided results due to their creative powers (Jarret 1969, 545)

Songs and stories stimulated the child's imaginations and introduced him or her to their cultural literature.

The games gave the child a sense of community as well as "an opportunity to share in cooperative activities that contributed to his or her socialization and motor competencies (Gutek 1995, 262). Games also built relationships and provided a group of ideas (Jarret 1969, 545).

Interviewer: From what you have discussed, what contributions, influence and impact has Froebel had on education in the 19th and 20th centuries?

Educator: The idea of development, interests or activities of the child and the fact that the teacher is to provide an environment that is conducive to the child's 'unfolding,' point out clearly that Froebel was at heart a developmentalist and/or progressivist.

His aim of education as the development of the child's inborn capacities and powers, the unfolding of what is within the child, together with the rejection of depravity in children, are emphases found in progressivism.

Apparently, Froebel was against memorization. His concern was that education avoid memorization as found in traditional education. Learning was to develop the child's creativity and perception. What was learned at school was to be enjoyed (Reed & Prevost 1993, 253). Learning was not to be painful or boring but enjoyable and useful. Play aided learning. Like Locke, Froebel stands as a forerunner of modern educational theory, especially in his recognition that a child should not be pushed beyond his ability and readiness; and in his sensitivity to the child's 'natural inclinations.' This idea resembles contemporary child growth and development theories (Ulich 1975, 546).

His influence spread to schools in Europe through his travels as he gave lectures and demonstrations. And in America as early as 1855, through migrations and people who had connections with his schools. In the use of the materials, his influence extended into grades one and two of the elementary school.

The educative activities of child-centredness, self-activities, and the place of a 'felt need' are principles that have had great impact over the centuries, developed and modified further by philosophers like John Dewey.

The use of symbols in kindergarten or pre-schools is an impact from Froebel. An emphasis of this is found in the construction of wooden blocks, numbers and word games, drawing, singing, dancing and nature study.

As a result of Froebel's work, educational theorists and reformers have come in great numbers. Educational practices have greatly improved. For example, from Jean Rousseau's days, attitudes toward children and child-life has become more intelligent (Knight 1940, 369); knowledge of the nature and needs of children has increased; discipline by suppression has decreased, though to its disadvantage; and the personality of the child has come to be more fully respected.

Another great influence is the importance of the relation of the school to life outside it. This importance has been recognized more than before. The view of education as growth has gained a wider perspective, and self-activity as a law of growth has come to be accepted. The production of common schools, especially in America, is a result of these influences.

Froebel's technique and use of material objects was years later promoted by Maria Montessori in educational process as well as interest. In an expansion of Froebel's idea, her method employed the use of all sorts of experiences with blocks, cylinders and geometric patterns. These experiences assist in the cognitive development of the child as well as in his or her physical development (Ozmon & Craver 1981, 63).

Interviewer: The monument over Froebel's grave is, "Come let us live for our children." If you were to summarize his influence so as to capture his aim in the education of children, what would your summary include?

Educator: My summary would include five principles: self-activity, connectedness and unbroken continuity, creativeness, physical activity, and happy and harmonious surroundings. The influence has come about through the study of Froebel's principles, the description of his kindergarten,

interest in the formation of such schools, and because of their nature the kindergarten as an integral part of school systems.

Interviewer: From the works of Froebel, what is his greatest contribution to Christian education?

Educator: Froebel's theories contain positive as well as 'Christian' contributions. The greatest of this is the encouragement children should receive so as to give expression to their religious observations and feelings. But I would caution parents and teachers alike to beware of elevating goodness in humanity, be it a child, a youth, or an adult. For the Bible rightly says that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). While there is good in the distorted human nature, even after the fall, which needs to be cultivated, Froebel did well to focus his education on the whole person and not just on intellectual concerns. Religious sensitivity should be upheld and provided with good Christian teaching.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Cole, Luella. 1950. *A history of education*. New York: Rinehart & Company Publishers.
- Dupuis, Adrian. 1985. *Philosophy of education in historical perspective*. University Press of America.
- Froebel, Friedrich. 1896. *The education of man*. Trans. W.N. Hailman. New York: Appleton.
- Gangel, Kenneth O. and Warren S. Benson. 1983. *Christian education: its history and philosophy*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Gutek, GERAL L. 1995. *A history of the western educational experience*. Prospect Heights: Waveland, Inc.
- _____. 1974. *Philosophical alternatives in education*. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company.
- Jarret, James L. 1969. *Philosophy of education*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- Kneller, George F. 1971. *Introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Knight, Edgar W. 1940. *Twenty centuries of education*. Boston: Ginn and Company.
- Lawrence, Evelyn. Ed. 1969. *Friedrich Froebel and the English education*. London: Routledge & Kegan.
- Lucas, Christopher J. 1972. *Our western educational heritage*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc.
- Ozmon, Howard A. and Samuel M. Craver. 1981. *Philosophical foundations of education*. Bell and Howell Company.
- Reed, James E. and Ronnie Prevost. 1993. *A history of Christian education*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Smith, L. Glenn and Joan K. Smith. 1994. *Lives in education: a narrative of people and ideas*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Ulich, Robert. 1982. *Three thousand years of educational wisdom*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Wilds, Elmer H. and Kenneth V. Lottich. 1961. *The foundations of modern education*. New York: Hold, Rinehard and Winston, Inc.

CONTRIBUTORS INVITED FOR AJET

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE ATTITUDE OF THE HISTORICAL CHURCHES TO POVERTY AND WEALTH: A CHALLENGE FOR AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

James F. Ndyabahika*

INTRODUCTION

Money is a symbol of God's created world. It is the medium of exchange. Having it or lacking it separates people and creates a barrier between them as persons. As a consequence, they trade part of their time when they find themselves in need of it to balance their expenditure in the areas of quality education, medical services, decent houses and adequate clothing that match their tastes. As a Christian Church historian, I am not overstressing that money is what is important in life. Nevertheless, without it life is miserable.

When the *faithful Christians* read the Bible within the lenses of such background, the rescue they often seek from God is in terms of the right amount of money at the right time and in the right place. It is certainly true that a big fraction of the well to do Christians who are considered "good" hardly help the poor. They comfort themselves likening the "poor" to *the body of Humpty-Dumpty* who sat on a wall, fell down and broke into pieces. Instead of trying to put together the body of Humpty-Dumpty, they comfort themselves "myopically" saying; *the materially poor are poor because they are lazy or unfortunate or both. Others who meagerly help the*

* Rev. Canon James F. Ndyabahika, an ordained minister in the Anglican Church of Uganda, presently lectures at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. He has an MA and an M.Div both from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, USA; he has also earned an M.Th from Aberdeen University, Scotland and a Ph.D from the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

poor in order to enhance the economic system, which put them *at a 'thank you Mama-Papa' end*. The poor know that such people are rich because of their covetousness and greed. And such wealth gives them power to marginalize, aggrandize, deprive, abuse and subjugate them to such subhuman conditions as if they are second-class *Homo sapiens*.

Can the church admit the existence of a sharp antithesis between personal morality and other unhealthy practices which are rampant in some of the businesses? What is the position of the Church on the issues that confront the *poorest of the poor*? Why do the poor find it difficult to get justice? Some of these questions will be addressed indirectly in the body of this paper. However, Solomon's position is clear:

Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man (person) is deserted even by his (her) friends (Proverb 19:4).

We are ashamed of the above quotation but it is a common practice. A frank recognition of it is necessary if we are to be guided by Christian ethics in helping the materially poor. In Africa, there are proverbs and sayings that describe the fortunes of the *rich and the poor*. One example will suffice. A *Kiganda* proverb stresses that God showers his blessings *like air* upon the rich (*omukisa mpewo, nobwogalawo guyinira* - even though doors are closed, still more blessings enter to bless the rich).

But, should some *Christians* be poor? The writer is not using the subject of the poor as a retagged-subplot to bash the rich. Nevertheless, he smells a historical or religious rat and rightly so. The rich promote the Jesuit philosophy; the *end justifies the means*. Invariably, poverty affects both men and women, young and old, educated and non-educated and it eventually creates a vicious cycle. The picture portrayed by poverty is multidimensional in nature. Without doubt, it is real. All these seem to lead to the widespread political slogan that poverty must be eliminated. Too painful to remember and too painful to admit, a big fraction of the "faithful Christians" in our Churches *are, very, very, very poor*.

DEFINITIONS

The writer may be excused for the sake of clarity if he could first give definitions of some terms that are used in this presentation. He will first

define *faithful Christians*, and then give a résumé relating to poverty, *wealth and Church* before he objectively enhances the biblical and historical observations. He will conclude by looking at the attitude of the mainline Churches to the *trio thorny and naïve contemporary issues*. To begin with, in this new century, a clear definition of the word “*Christian*” is required to face the daunting religious agenda, including increased poverty, ethnic and territorial conflicts, wars, ignorance, ecological destruction, environmental degradation, disease and (HIV/AIDS) pandemic. Nevertheless, by *Christian*, we understand all baptized people who believe in Jesus Christ. They may be young or old, committed or non-committed, virtuous or scandalous. They live in all parts of our nations: cities, towns and villages. They engage in all sorts of professions. Some receive monthly salaries and others do not. Some are either self-employed or have no employment at all.

On the other side of the spectrum, *poverty* means unsatisfied want or not having sufficient access to resources or lack of necessary materials to meet the basic needs in life. Morally and culturally, the poor can be perceived as powerless, hopeless, lacking participation in decision-making at the grassroots level - all of which lead to betrayal and defeatism. Socially and economically, when contrasted with the *ghettoes* of Johannesburg, *shanty areas* of Nairobi and *slums* of Harare, poverty becomes inexcusable. Biblically and spiritually, the poor (Greek *ptokhois*, Hebrew *hanavim*) include the poor in spirit who may be *rich* in material things.

Thirdly, by *wealth*, we mean to own a lot of assets (money), or having more than others. The Bible does not condemn it. Although our Lord Jesus Christ criticised the Pharisees for not relating their religious piety with acts of mercy, he hardly expects the faithful Christians to give up everything in order to follow him (Matthew 6:19-33; Luke 12:15-33). Joseph of Arimathea is described as *a rich person* and as ‘a disciple of Jesus’. Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax-collector, promised to pay back to the people he had cheated four times what he had taken, and to give half of his possessions to the poor, which presumably means that he kept the other half, apart from what he paid back to his victims. Yet Jesus said that salvation had been given to him (Matthew 27:57; Luke 19:8-10). In the book of Acts, the tragedy which befell Ananias and his wife Saphira was not that they were selfish to withhold some of their property, but that they

were deceitful to pretend they had given it all. Peter said to Ananias: 'didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal?' (Acts, 5:1-10) Christians in the early church practiced communalism. We too can in our own way, champion the move and plough the little land in order to help the poor.

Lastly, by the word *Church* (which is derived from the Greek, word *ekklesia*), we mean, an assembly of citizens duly summoned or a local congregation of Christians (Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians, 1:2; Galatians, 1:22); or a Christian place of worship. In Acts of the Apostles, Pauline Epistles, Petrine Texts, the Epistle of James, Johannine Letters, and the book of Revelation, the word Church is referred to as a particular local congregation of the people of God, the powerful as well as the marginalized. As time progressed, a team of elders governed the Church (Greek, *presbuteros*), and one became the chief elder. With the passage of time, the office of chief elder evolved into that of *episcopos* (*overseer or bishop*). Within this perspective, the tempo of the ministry of bishops began to grow as they exercised authority over other churches. A line hardly pursued historically and which should be enhanced by the faithful is that in God's purpose, there is only one Church, gathering under the leadership of Jesus Christ. But on earth, the Church is seen wherever two or three are gathered in His name (*Matthew 18:20*). There is no need to explain the relationship between the one and the many; this will perhaps take us beyond the parameters of this research paper because beyond the biblical image of the Church are many denominations. Their existence raises the awkward question, "which church?" One Church? *Una sancta*? It cannot be so when the ecclesiastical map is like the shell of a tortoise!

BIBLICAL TEACHING AND HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS

In the New Testament, Paul states that the *love of money is the root of all evils* (1 Timothy 6:10). African Church historians and missiologists are challenged not to misquote him. Paul did not say that money is evil. In the Letter to the Hebrews, the writer challenges the *faithful Christians* to keep their lives free from money (Hebrews 13:5). Nevertheless, money in the hands of unscrupulous persons creates social, economic and religious problems culminating into *income poverty, food poverty, infrastructure poverty and spiritual poverty*. Although Solomon's view (Proverbs 14:20) is a good take off point and a critique of a number of societal structures,

institutions and patterns of life that affect the poor,[†] there are still unsolved economic and Christian ethical issues, which leave the *faithful Christians* with a moral problem. The problem is how to attain adequate spiritual maturity and self-understanding as well as to justify the desire for more money and wealth on the basis of need rather than of love for it. This is a bold thesis.

Behind the above scenario however, is the interpretation of the two terms in question "*poor and wealth*". In the New Testament, there are some biblical passages in which the word poor is used in the company of other words to clarify its meaning. The gospel of Matthew 11:4-5 lists the blind, lame, deaf with the poor. In Luke 6:20-21, the poor ranks with those who hunger, thirst and mourn. James 2:3-6 points out that the shabbily dressed people are powerless. And Revelation 3:17-18, considers the poor wretched while the rich prosper. The writer is not exaggerating, we have poverty in all the nine aspects of life: religious, economic, spiritual, moral, mental, social, cultural, physical and political. Admittedly, poverty is dangerous, dehumanizing, pervasive and acute.

As far as wealth is concerned, there are passages in which the equivalent word *for rich* is used in the New Testament: treasure, mammon, property and money (wealth). The writer of the Gospel of Matthew calls such "Wealthy" people (I venture to stress with capital "W"), the *the mighty proud* (Matt. 6:19-21). In the Gospel of Mark, they control abundant resources from which they do not give heartedly to the poor (Mark 10:23-24 see also Luke 6:24-25). Perhaps, the fullest descriptions of the moral quality of being rich is in James 5:1-7 where the writer stresses that the *rich* trust in their perishable possessions – garments, gold, silver, fields and amassed goods.

With that in mind, the *faithful Christians* are aware that the historical Churches are full of incidents where the Church gave her heart away to

[†] Matthew Theuri, "Poverty in Africa", in Mary N. Getui and Emmanuel A. Obeng (eds.), *Theology of Reconstruction*, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1999), 230-242.

prosperity and wealth, which have the grimmest and unrealistic witness[‡]. The practice of simony (during the Dark Ages), selling indulgences (prior to and during the reformation period), modern lotteries, fundraising in Church premises and many additional practices are eloquent examples of unprecedented and imaginable proportion for the acquisition of wealth.[§] Today, a pastoral survey confirms that some churches own a lot of resources and property: Institutions of Higher Learning (Universities), Schools, hospitals, hotels (hostels), banks, buses and buildings for renting. Shocking to the *faithful Christians*, the historical churches have become overwhelmingly the Churches of the rich. Going by this observation, several centuries ago, a Roman Catholic Pope is reported to have surveyed the vast riches he had amassed, and to have gloated; “no longer can the Church of Jesus Christ now say; *silver and gold have I none. True, Sire, a subordinate replied, “but then neither can the Church now say, ‘Rise up and go. At worst, “material wealth has always carried the Church (faithful Christians included) into spiritual bankruptcy.”*”^{**} Thus, increased wealth does not lead to increased righteousness; instead, it leads to spiritual and moral poverty.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TO POVERTY AND WEALTH IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

While more critics have pushed the Church from left, right and to the centre, the fact remains she has a noble cause to address. She must set up her determination to teach her followers the vocation of their Christian services (1Timothy 5:18) and be transformed by the Gospel in order that they may carry the indelible marks of the Gospel (Matthew 7:18-20). She must encourage them to learn new skills, which will under-gird their daily

[‡] M.A. Gitui, *Moral things in Contemporary African Society*, in J.N.K. Mugambi and A. Nasimiyu-Wasike (eds.), *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Initiative Publishers, 1992), 60-72.

[§] It is significant to note that one can be materially rich and spiritually poor or materially poor and spiritually rich. See how, Laurenti Magesa deplored the unwanted stand of the church in his article entitled “Some Critical Theological Pastoral Issues Facing the Church in East Africa,” *African Christian Studies*, (1988), 43-60; A.E. Harvey, *Strenuous commands – The Ethics of Jesus*, (London: SCM Press, 1990), 117-125.

⁴ Samuel Kunhiyop, “Powers, Good News for Africa”, *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (2000), .3-39.

programmes. If the Church will do this, no doubt, many people who now seem lost will recover and our nations will receive new life. Intensive farming will start (*our land is our prosperity – as stressed in Zimbabwe*), strong philosophy of self-reliance will be promoted, and individuals will acquire new skills in planning and management. Instead of losing heart, folding hands around their bodies, walking in self-pity, weeping over spilt milk; they will be encouraged to improve their situation guided by Christian work ethics.

If the historical Churches promote Solomon's teaching that the rich and the poor rub shoulders and the Lord is their maker (Proverbs, 22:2), then, a new Christian ethics in the African context, governed by a new economic, political and Christian teaching has to be advanced whereby the rich must live more simply and the poor may also simply live^{††}. All this makes it clear that the historical Churches would open a whole range of opportunities, which will enhance strong campaigns aimed at producing job-creators but not job seekers. In this way, Christian Universities, Tertiary Institutions and Institutions of Higher Learning will be encouraged to promote this new school of thought in their curricula. Christianity is a religion of new life and hope. The hope is that the faithful Christians will overcome some day.

In the twentieth century, particularly in East Africa, this hope was stressed as a preparation to go to heaven. This implies (a) transcending the limitations of human powers and knowledge in the presence of the Almighty God, (b) attaining everlasting life through Jesus Christ, and (c) final victory over sin and a reward for those who were saved, are being saved as well as to be saved and constantly empowered the Holy Spirit. Martin Luther King called this new hope - a '*dream*.'

It is therefore in this context above all, that we mention some of the issues that hamper the spiritual growth and eschatological hope, which the historical churches have to address. Such issues include: terrorism, homosexuality, lesbians, prostitution, abortion, child-abuse, witchcraft, sorcery, wife/men beating, drug abuse, devil worship, alcoholism, embezzlement, just to mention a few. More than ever before, all Churches

^{††} Gwamna Je 'Adayibe' 'Where your treasure is: A consideration of Jesus' Teaching on Possessions', *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (2000), 29-45.

have to address different ideologies that cause eye-brows to raise either out of curiosity or condemnation because they trash the existence of God and family values: the media, videotapes, blue movies, nude theaters, cable TV, Internet and pornography. All these are maliciously damaging the authentic fabric of our cultural heritage and religious values in Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, Australia, North and South America. In fact, our economic, cultural and Christian values have been shaken^{††}.

What has been done: Far too often, the Church has allowed herself to be backed away from her responsibility to a little corner of her “*spiritual*” province. And strangely enough, even some of the blazing prophets within the Pentecostals, Charismatic and Renewal Churches who argue with relevance about the place of their Churches on the contemporary scene, are strangely silent when the subject relating to “the attitude of the Churches to poverty^{§§}, wealth^{***} and prosperity” in *our nations, leave alone in African Christianity*^{†††}, is top on the agenda for discussion. This being so, all Churches as well as spiritual movements must be reminded that they are the salt of the earth as well as the light of the world and the *faithful Christians* constantly turn to them when they feel the pressure of darkness at all levels (Matthew 5:14-16, Mark 4:21-28).

^{††} Keith Eitel, *Transforming Culture, Developing a Biblical Ethic in an Africa Context*, (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1986), 94-105. Amplifying this subject, Eitel brilliantly stressed that materialism and wealth within the parameters of the Biblical teaching will be the major threats to the lives of the faithful Christians before God. The trio must be dealt with and the faithful Christians must be put in their proper place or else, the Lordship of Jesus Christ will be compromised (Matthew 6:19-21; Luke 12:33).

^{§§} Narcisio Bagumisiriza, “Poverty and Hunger in Uganda Today” in Douglas Wanjohi Waruta (ed.), *Caring and sharing: Pastoral Counseling in African Perspective*, (Nairobi: Act Print, 1995), 177-196.

^{***} John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 273-281; Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a non – Western Religion*, (New York: Mary knoll Orbis, 1995), 126-155; Matthew Theuri, “Poverty in Africa”, in Mary N. Getui and Emmanuel A. Obeng (eds.), *Theology of Reconstruction*, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1999), .230-242.

^{†††} Peter Kanyandago, “The disfigured body of Jesus Christ and African ecclesiology”, in J.N.K Mũgambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds.), *The church in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Initiative Press, 1990), pp. 180-192.

In this respect, they are called upon to pay critical attention to causes and symptoms of moral degeneration. And for this to happen, they must face the real issues of poverty, greed, corruption, inadequate housing, hunger, ignorance, disease, leave alone HIV/AIDS scourge and famine. They must restore the image of the Garden of Eden, which is taken to mean *a place to feel at home* (including rivers, agricultural land, plants and animals that grace this planet)⁺⁺⁺. Only when the Churches understand this broad principle, can they rise up with boldness and begin to see that they have a tremendous role to play and a *word to speak about the restoration of the image of the Garden of Eden*.

From the writer's historical, missiological and practical studies, he has observed that some of their followers are now shifting gears:

- Some have decided to enter the *trade industry* with all the risks involved and the moral code that govern their activities.
- Others have taken on extra-employment in order to make both ends meet.
- Some qualified teachers and government employees have opted to become self-employed on the ground that a daily income is far better than a monthly salary.
- Some have decided to move from towns or cities to the villages in order to acquire plots of land and built small houses which are at least their own and where they are assured of food security without paying for it.
- Lastly, others have drastically reduced their expenditure in order to observe the Christian moral and spiritual codes, which they have learnt from childhood that enhance the inner joy and satisfaction even amidst physical and economic hardships or sufferings. They recall the biblical teaching, which directs people to obedience, sacrifice, acceptance of suffering and a good life hereafter (James 1:5-8). They continue to look to God for the solution (1Peter 5:7).

⁺⁺⁺ Going to Church has yielded indigenous Christians who have reduced religion to a kind of uniform, something put one day and discarded the rest of the week. Ardent confessed Christians go to *pray* on Sunday, only to return home to *prey* on each other! One should not be shocked to see respected Christians desiring material possessions and using wrong channels to acquire them at the expense of forgetting the internal possessions, which are found in religion and God.

It is in this context that some biblical claims and Christian ethical principles are significant. Admittedly, that is what every missionary did since Paul, every preacher since Peter and every biblical student, perhaps since Apollos and Timothy have believed. Anyone who has tried to understand the relevance of the message of the Bible in relationship to contemporary issues has done the same. Today, we call this process "conceptualization".^{§§§}

Functionally, if conceptualization is joyfully shared, it will make the biblical message expressed, felt and lived in the cultural context of the people of Africa. That said, however, it is good to note that when the *faithful Christians*, face such harsh realities in life, they are comforted to know that they are following Jesus Christ who did not carry money or own any. He had no time to acquire wealth and property. He had no silver, no gold, no cash income, no property, no current account, no savings account, and no financial reserves. It is readily understandable that he lived by what he taught and his impact on the world was and is still enormous. He had nowhere to lay his head. He was less well off than the foxes and birds of the air. Renouncing the heavenly wealth, He was born in a borrowed stable and died naked on a rugged cross. Positively He did not come from the day-to-day - laborers and landless tenants, but was from a middle class of skilled people of the Province of Galilee.

For the above reasons, like his father, he was (*a tekton*, - a Greek word, which means mason or) a carpenter and a joiner all rolled into one: an

^{§§§} Max L. Stackhouse, "Contextualization and Theological Education", *Theological Education*, (1986), 67-84; by definition contextualization is "that dynamic process that attempts to interpret the significance of a religion or culture norm for a group with a different (or developed) cultural heritage" and its purpose is to move from "what it meant" to "what it means." As such it comprises what homilicians call "application" and is exemplified in the Bible itself. See also O. Imasogie, "Contextualization: constrictive interaction between culture, people, church, and the theological programme, *African East Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1993), 19-23; Tite Tienou, "Issue in the Theological Task in Africa Today," *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1982), 3-10; Bruce Framing *Contextualization of Theology: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980), pp. 67-68; Fabian Maganda, "Contextualising Jesus 'the only mediator' for the Sukuma people of Tanzania", *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (2002), 147-164.

artisan. Granted, he founded what was largely the original Church of the poor, a fellowship of the oppressed, the exploited, the powerless, the deprived, and the dispossessed. And he commanded his *first followers* not to carry gold, silver and money in their pockets. This trend of thought leads us to the last important point.

What then ought we to do? To respond more appropriately to the current state of affair in our nations where some *Christians* are deeply involved in squandering national and Church resources, where some people in positions of responsibility do not know how to manage government and Church funds; where

some people in charge of church projects use institutional property to promote their own projects instead of using it for the purpose it was meant for, where others in high positions were appointed to such high offices because they are either friends or relatives but not because they were competent; there cannot be a better time to address this topic than now. These few examples give a dawning and gloomy picture of some people in our Churches, who are culturally undisciplined, morally perverted, religiously blind and spiritually bankrupt.

It must be re-asserted that the historical, Pentecostal, Charismatic and African Initiated Churches are challenged to accept the above reality in order to address the matters squarely relating to prophetic, spiritual and pastoral issues. Failure to do that, these thorny issues would spill over from the sanctuary into the public arena, especially in some nations with a strong Christian heritage. Thus, to fulfill this noble task, all Churches have to strengthen their biblical and spiritual campaign in order to safeguard moral and spiritual ethics in our nations****. Based on these observations, they have to teach their followers to protect the environments: forests, swamps, minerals and other energy and natural resources. They have to challenge the governments to promote human rights, establish new economic policies, promote fair distribution of the national cake (revenues), create employment, eliminate personal greed, and rehabilitate industries, agricultural enterprises and trade.

**** George Kinoti and Peter Kimunyu (eds.), *Vision for Bright Africa, facing challenges of development*, (Nairobi IFES Anglophone Africa, 1997), 194-196.

All the faithful Christians in every corner of our nations should be shown how to fight against poverty. At all costs, they should never ever lower their spiritual morality and Christian ethics in order to survive economically. Behind such observation is the concern to come to the rescue of the poor, the needy and give them a chance to live a decent life. But sympathy does not mean sentimentality. The poor have to master the art of money acquisition. Based on historical research, devotional studies and lessons learnt in life, without money there is no economic security. Church sponsored agencies; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) should enhance programmes and projects to help these targeted groups. At a practical level, the material poor^{††††} should be encouraged to acquire loans from the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund (ECLOF)-Geneva and Ecumenical Development Cooperative Society (EDCS)-Netherlands. All they need is the will to do it. Thus, the historical Churches are challenged to jump on the (Christian) economic wagon and ride holding boldly the ECLOF and EDCS banners.

Unless, instead of a desire for easy money is replaced by determination for hard work and sweat, we do not see light through the tunnel; hence, we *shall be doomed*. *A good case in point, we have at our disposal the manpower, the brainpower, the spiritual power and the technological know-how*. It is within this framework that the rich are challenged to rededicate their lives to the sufficiency of God's word in all matters relating to materialism and to care sacrificially for the wretchedly poor.^{††††} *Accordingly, God's chosen, the poor, the rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom should not be overlooked.*

CONCLUSION

^{††††} Materialism' is not the mere possession of material things, but an unhealthy obsession with them. It is but a short step from wealth to materialism, from having riches to putting our trust in them, and many take it. But it is foolish. There is no security in wealth. It is not for nothing that Paul writes of 'uncertain riches.' Burglars, pests, rust and inflation all take their toll.

^{††††} F.F Bruce, *The Hard Saying of Jesus*, (Downs -Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), pp. 184; M.A. Gitui, *Moral things in Contemporary African Society*", in J.N.K. Mugambi and A. Nasimiyu-Wasike (eds.), *Moral and Ethical Issues in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Initiative Publishers, 1992), pp. 60-72.

In summary, my presentation stresses that *economic growth* does not eliminate poverty. Inequality between *rich* and *poor* will continue to grow. Biblical and historical and missiological observation have shown that wealth in itself is not evil. Nevertheless, *righteousness not money* will exalt the *faithful Christians* in our historical Churches. In this vein, the historical Churches must take seriously the holistic mandate of teaching the *faithful Christians* to understand the central biblical teaching in respect to *poverty, prosperity and wealth*. Thus, what is paramount is *wealthy theology, poverty theology and conceptualized theology*, which will enhance the idea that money should be devoted to the programmes that are in the mind of God; not only some of it but all of it. The second point is not a side issue. Visionary Church leaders are needed who have the capacity and will to lead *their followers* away from *egocentricity* towards *Christ-centered interests*, geared to spiritual maturity. The lack of clear vision means that church leaders will not lead their followers diligently. Another point high on the agenda is to crystallize and sensitize unreservedly the *faithful Christians* who are *materially* poor to secure loans from the ECLOF and to tap the economic and religious potential offered by the EDCS.

It is clear from the above facts that there is a call for the leaders of the old Churches not only to teach the *faithful Christians* who sit in the pews every Sunday but also to visit them at their places of work (where their wealth lies) and help them to know the significance of their assets (banks and property) and how to use them profitably; not the *ten per cent only* but the total of it. Unless these resources are utilized for the right purposes, in the end, the historical Churches and other Churches will ultimately prove to have had minimal spiritual impact upon their neophytes, leave alone their respective nations. Wealth acquisition, which does not take care of the needy, the marginalized and the poorest of the poor, is brutal and inhumane.

In order to fulfill their goals, the historical Church leaders must teach their followers the holistic culture of prayers, which will under-gird their programmes. In fact, behind every extraordinary supernatural move of God are people who have dedicated themselves to earnest prayers. Prayers prepare the hearts of God's people for His blessings. Without prayers the Churches cannot successfully fulfill the God-given mission of articulating the Christian gospel (*euangelion*), which is vital in African Christianity. Of

course, this opens up some interesting ecumenical possibilities, for if Churches are seriously engaged in seeking to express their unity, then the role of the ecumenical prayer pattern could be a powerful means to that end. All this makes clear that the *faithful Christians* are apostles of hope rather than despair and pessimism. They are also challenged to turn from greed for money and repent. Genuine repentance is always characterized by resolute to turn from ungodly acts to godly ways. This kind of repentance brings radical change (revival). It does not compromise with worldly attitudes and actions. It requires covenanting with God about things one would no longer return to and things one would now dedicate one's life for. At best, the Churches "*raison detre*" is to bring salvation to the *faithful Christians* ^{§§§§}. By and large, the *Christian life is not Jesus Christ plus, but Jesus Christ period*. This is the crux of the New Testament teaching.

In a nutshell, as the *faithful Christians face the twenty-first century, they are challenged to reevaluate their values and set their priorities towards spiritual maturity*. They need to be reminded of Jesus' teaching in respect to wealth acquisition and not be consumed into *the crazy chase for possessions or following economic winds of change*, which has led many astray recently into all kinds of evils. This is an appropriate example of some people who behave as followers of Jesus Christ and then become backsliders or drop into oblivion after their obedience to him goes down completely because of money and its use. Failure to do this, mammon will win, the poor will suffer and the rich will not be brought to conviction. Increased wealth does not lead to increased righteousness. On the contrary, it leads to spiritual poverty. This additional point is evocative, but it may also be a problem because it may lead to generalize spirituality; I welcome dialogue on this subject.

Some Suggestions

Having studied the situation in which the *faithful Christians* live in our respective nations, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Along with fund raising programmes for schools (which are beneficial to the youth who attend schools); should fundraising programmes be promoted during Church services with intent to

^{§§§§} Maniama Manjorie Williams, "Poverty and economic issues" in *We Are Witnesses: The Lutheran Word Federation Documentation on Wwomen in Church and Society*, Geneva (1995), 28-31

open some practical projects in the rural areas at community level for the poorest of the poor?

- What mechanism can be employed by our Churches to enable them not to rely heavily on foreign aid?
- How can our Churches promote projects which will alleviate the plight of many jobless people, including the faithful Christians in our nations?
- Can our Governments make concrete plans for her graduates so as to cut down the number of job seekers?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adayibe Je Gwamna, "Where your treasure is': A consideration of Jesus' Teaching on Possessions," in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (2000), 29-45.

Bediako, Kwame, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1995.

Bruce F. F., *The Hard sayings of Jesus*, Downs -Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993

Eitel, Keith. *Transforming Culture, Developing a Biblical Ethic in an Africa Context*, Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1986.

Framing, Bruce, *Contextualization of Theology: An introduction and Commentary*, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980.

Gitui, N. Mary and Emmanuel Obeng a (eds.), *Theology of Reconstruction: Exploratory Essays*, Nairobi: Action Publishers, 1999.

Harvey, A.E., *Strenuous commands - The Ethics of Jesus*, London: SCM Press, 1990.

Imasogie, O. "Contextualization: Constructive Interaction between Culture, People, Church and the Theological Programme", *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (1993), pp.19-23.

- Kanyandago, Peter. "The disfigured body of Jesus Christ and African Ecclesiology" in J. N. K. Mugambi and L. Magesa (eds.) *The Church in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Initiative Press, 1990), pp. 180- 192.
- Kinoti, George and Peter Kimuyu (eds.) *Vision for Bright Africa, Facing Challenges of Development*, Nairobi IFES Anglophone Africa, 1997
- Kunhiyop, Samuel. "Powers, good News for Africa," in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (2000), pp.3-39.
- Magesa Lauretti 'Some Critical Theological Pastoral Issues Facing the Church in East Africa.' *African Christian Studies*, 4 (1988), pp 43-60
- Maganda Fabian, "Contextualizing Jesus 'The only Mediator' for the Sukuma people of Tanzania" in *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (2002), 147-164.
- Mugambi, J. N. K. and N. Wasike A. *Moral and Ethical issues in Africa Christianity*, Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1882.
- Sider, J. "Rich Christians in an age of hunger" in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, (1980), 70-83.
- Stott, John. *Issues Facing Christians Today*. London: Marshall Picketing, 1990.
- Taylor, N. H. "The contextualisation of Christianity in the Early Church," *Reflection on Church Faith: An African context*, MUTARE, Zimbabwe: Africa University Press, (2002), 41-54.
- Theuri, Matthew, "Poverty in Africa," in Mary N. Gitui and Emmanuel A Obeng (eds.) *Theology of Reconstruction*, Nairobi: Action Publishers, (1999), 230-242.
- Tienou, Tite, "Issue in the Theological Task in Africa Today," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*, (1982), 3-10.
- Waruta, W. Douglas, (ed.), *Caring and sharing: Pastoral Counseling in African Perspective*, Nairobi: Act Print Ltd., 1995.

Book Reviews

Gareth Jones, Editor

The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology

Oxford: Blackwell Publishing
(Blackwell Companion to Religion)

2004. xx + 586 pages, ISBN: 0631-20685-X US\$144

Due to the rapidly increasing specialization of theology, most of us find it more and more difficult to keep generally informed and updated in that field. In response to this, we currently experience a flood of new handbooks trying to aid us in that quest. The present specimen of the genre, edited by Gareth Jones of Christ Church University College in Canterbury (UK), is a good one, partly because it has chosen a number of well established researchers (including some typical evangelicals) to write about their particular areas, but partly also because it has limited the number of subject entries to 32, which, in a book of nearly six hundred pages, means that each subject gets some real attention. The book is divided in five major parts. First, seven articles offer a general survey of theology and the practice of faith, theology and biblical studies, theology and philosophy, etc. then come four articles on history, namely patristic, medieval, reformation and modernity. Next are five articles on some particular themes, such as trinity, incarnation, redemption, eschatology, and church and sacraments; followed by eight entries on certain key figures, such as Schleiermacher, Barth and Bonhoeffer. And finally, eight contributions on certain contemporary issues, such as Christianity and other religions, economics and social justice, race, feminism, etc.

The major problem with this book is not what it includes, but what it excludes. Even in a typically British volume, where each entry tries to relate its topic to the British context, it is surprising to find that non-Western church life and theology are more or less totally absent. A few references to Latin-American liberation theology pop up here and there, but the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is now *the* Christian continent seems to be

unknown to the editor and authors, in spite of their wish to present a survey of modern theology. Can the book, on this background, be recommended for African institutions? Well, in the same way as Western theological students eventually will have to familiarize themselves with African theology and church life, African students, too, need to familiarize themselves with Western theology and church life. An, as such, the present book is a good introduction and well worth knowing about. Nevertheless, the deficiency in scope combined with the remarkable price will probably prevent even many academic libraries in Africa from actually buying it.

Professor Knut Holter

Rector, School of Mission and Theology, Stravanger, Norway

Richard A. Bailey & Gregory A. Wills (eds)
The Salvation of Souls: Nine Previously
Unpublished Sermons on the Call of
Ministry and the Gospel

(By Jonathan Edwards)

Wheaton Illinois: Crossway Books 2002

190 pages, ISBN: 1-58134-451-1

Background of the Author

Jonathan Edwards lived from 1703 to 1758. He was one of the initiators of the first Great Awakening and one of the greatest preachers during that revival, that is, the first transatlantic revival in the 18th century. Edwards was the son of a Congregational minister. His grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, also was a minister of the Lord who was in charge of the congregation in Northampton, Massachusetts until his death in 1729. Edwards had served as assistant to his grandfather from 1727 to 1729. From 1729 to 1750 he was the only minister of the congregation in Northampton. He had a bachelor's degree from Yale which he had received in 1726. (For more background information on Jonathan Edwards, see Elwell (ed) *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 1984, 344)

From 1750 to his death in 1758, he ministered at Stockbridge, Massachusetts to congregations of Indians and whites. He died on March 22, 1758 as a result of being inoculated for smallpox. In 1750 Edwards was dismissed from Northampton congregation due to matters of principle. He was dismissed because he strongly held the opinion that Holy Communion should be partaken only by people who had professed faith in Christ, those who were judged by the church to be converted. Previously Holy Communion was partaken by anyone, even those who were professedly unconverted. That had been the case during Stoddard's, and even Edwards', early pastoral ministry. (Bailey and Wills (eds) 2002, 16)

Review of the Book

In the introductory remarks by the editors, it is said that right from the beginning the focus of Edwards' ministry was the salvation of sinners. From 1734 to 1735 it is said that Northampton experienced a remarkable revival in which virtually the whole town grew concerned about their eternal welfare and many professed saving faith. Edwards described this event in his *Faithful Narratives of the Surprising Work of God* which was published in 1737. Edwards published with the hope that it would prompt others to pray and preach for the salvation of sinners. This book is said to have set the stage for the vast transatlantic revival which was kindled in 1740 through the salvation preaching of itinerant George Whitefield. Edwards is said to have played a leading role and to have encouraged the awakening by preaching and publishing (Bailey and Wills, 16).

As the subtitle of this book states, the book is a composition of nine previously unpublished sermons on the call of ministry and the gospel. Only one of the nine sermons, that is, *Ministers to Preach Not Their Own Wisdom but the Word of God*, has been previously published in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (Volume 3, Number 2, Summer 1999). To Edwards, the primary work of the ministry is saving sinners; (see topic of sermon number 9 below). All nine sermons define the nature and the task of the minister of the gospel, as can be seen in the topics:

1. The Death of Faithful Ministers a Sign of God's Displeasure: Isaiah 3:12.
2. Ministers Need the Power of God: 2 Corinthians 4:7.
3. The Kind of Preaching People Want: Micah 2:11.

4. The Minister before the Judgment Seat of Christ: Luke 10:17-18.
5. Deacons to Care for the Body, Ministers for the Soul: Romans 12:4-8.
6. Ministers to Preach Not Their Own Wisdom but the Word of God: 1 Corinthians 2:11-13.
7. Pastor and People Must Look to God: Acts 14:23.
8. Preaching the Gospel Brings Poor Sinners to Christ: Acts 16:9.
9. The Work of the Ministry Is Saving Sinners: Acts 20:28.

Several of these sermons, especially sermons number 4 to 9, were preached during ordination services, during the installation of pastors and deacons. The first sermon was written and preached by Edwards as the congregation of the Northampton church was grieving the deaths of some of the town's leading men, including Solomon Stoddard, their pastor who also was Edwards' grandfather.

Just as Harry S. Stout (Jonathan Edwards Professor of American Christianity at Yale University) points out, this book should "be indispensable reading for seminarians, ministers, and church groups interested in engaging America's greatest philosopher, theologian, and pastor" (Blurb on back cover of *The Salvation of Souls*). Those who have previously been blessed by second-hand testimony about Jonathan Edwards and his achievements for the Lord will now get fresh first-hand blessings from God through the direct sermons of this great man of God. Those who are encountering him for the first time will equally be blessed tremendously.

It is obvious from the contents of each sermon that Edwards did thorough study of the texts which he used for his sermons. Each sermon is based on a main

text which is expounded by use of cross references for support and enlightenment. For example, sermon number 4: "The Minister before the Judgment Seat of Christ" which is based on Luke 10:17-18 as the main text is supported by, among others, Hebrews 13:17 where the ministers of the Gospel are enjoined to watch over the souls of the people whom they are put in charge of as people who must give an account. He also uses

Jeremiah 31:3 to show how God rejoices when people get saved and are made happy for they are objects of His great love.

Richard A. Bailey and Gregory A. Wills have done a superb job of editing and formatting the material according to modern principles of publication. They have rendered Edwards' contractions in their full-word form; for example, "han't" has been rendered as "has not" or "have not," "tis" to "it is," etc. But they have retained some of Edwards' archaic usages; for example, "aspeaking," and "abegging." They have modernized verb forms; for example, "doth" to "does," and "hath" to "has." They also have supplied punctuations and capitalization in accordance with modern literary standards.

Although these sermons were primarily targeting the American hearers of Edwards' day, the reader will find them to be equally challenging and inspiring to people of today in all parts of the Christian world. It is as if Edwards knew that they would live that long and be helpful even to Christians in Africa today. A glance at the title of each sermon awakens the desire to read it at once and get for oneself the riches therein. Indeed, reading each sermon satisfies the reader's expectation and curiosity which is whetted by each sermon title. For example, in the first sermon: *The Death of Faithful Ministers a Sign of God's Displeasure*, Edwards sounded the alarm that the death of the great men of God in Northampton may have been due to the fact that religion was declining, family and government were weakening, and licentiousness among the youth was spreading. Isn't this the same case today, even at an alarming expansion speed, in Africa and other parts of the world? Edwards' sermons are timeless and universal. To this day, they inspire individual Christians and the church as a whole towards revival.

Rev. Nathan Nzyoka Joshua, MDiv.

Lecturer & Dean of Students, Scott Theological College, Kenya