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

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The Bible and Its Cultural Context

Evangelicals are people of the Book. That book, written by numerous human authors (and one Divine Author) over thousands of years in three languages and translated into every mother tongue wherever it goes, is essential for the transformation of individuals and cultures into what God wants them to be. Christians apply the Bible to their cultures at many times and in various ways, but not always wisely, especially in these last days.

In this issue of AJET five African authors examine several issues in Africa (which are also found many other places in the world) from a Biblical perspective. Each uses the Bible and Biblical principles, but in various ways.

Joel Hamuli Songela engages in a detailed examination of the issue of *Divorce and Remarriage in Scripture*. Using Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and its interpretation by Jesus in Matthew 19:1-12, he covers these passages in some depth and relates them to other relevant passages as well. He concludes that, though it is difficult in this present age, the Biblical position requires a high view of marriage.

Kojo Okyere, in *The Pedagogy of Sexual Morality in Proverbs Five*, seeks to uncover the educational principles in the wisdom of Proverbs 5, which is about avoiding the adulteress. How does the teacher teach and how does the learner learn, especially in this deeply emotional area of sexual morality?

Joel K. T. Biwul, in *Preaching Biblically in the Nigerian Prosperity Gospel Context*, tries to persuade readers that Biblical preaching is a dying art in Nigeria. This is because so many Christian preachers are so attracted to the Prosperity Gospel, which he states, agreeing with Femi Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel*, is indeed a “different gospel” (Gal. 1:6-8). He points out how this false gospel creates and takes advantage of wrong motivations for preaching. The results are deadly for African Christians.

Luvuyo Ntombana, in *Reconciliation between the BCSA and the BUSA from a Biblical Perspective*, tackles in some detail one example of attempts at Christian reconciliation in two Baptist denominations in South Africa. It is fitting that, in the year that Nelson Mandela died, AJET is publishing an article on reconciliation in South Africa. The reconciliation attempts in this denomination were only partly successful, but even this teaches us some important lessons.

Emmanuel Amofo's article, *Improving African Christian Leadership: A Biblical View*, returns to the topic of our last issue, African Christian Leadership. He examines some useful aspects of a Biblical view of leadership.

The marriage relationship, teaching sexual morality, the importance of Biblically oriented preaching in the face of the overwhelming tide of false teaching, reconciliation between Christian denominations which used to be one, Christian leadership – God, through the Bible, will continue to help His people, His Church, become more like Jesus in all of life, if we pay attention.

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Divorce and Remarriage in Scripture

by Joel Hamuli Songela

Introduction

Over the years there has been a heated debate among scholars concerning divorce and remarriage. Though affirming the authority and unity of Scripture, commentators wrestle with the interpretation and application of divorce clauses without a consensus. In most African countries divorce used to be a taboo, and it is still considered a scandal in some parts of the continent.¹ But generally speaking divorce is becoming more and more common in Africa today. According to the Demographic Health Survey of Senegal's families, for instance, close to 300,000 women were divorced or separated in 2005.² Because of this, divorce and remarriage have become a challenge to pastors and/or spiritual leaders in the African church and theologians are consulted to give answers. The questions pursued include: Is it sinful or lawful to divorce? What are the grounds for a 'legitimate' divorce? Does Scripture allow a divorced person to remarry? This study will examine Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 19:1-10 in tackling these questions.³ Considering the historical and literary contexts of the pericopae, the study will explore each one of them and determine their contribution to our understanding of the subject. We will argue that God's will is no divorce for whatever reasons other than marital unfaithfulness (or adultery), and that there should be no remarriage following any divorce. More importantly, the study goes a step farther to explicate the grounds for the high standard set by God in Scripture for the marriages of His people.

The first part of our study deals with the background and context of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and Matthew 19:1-10. In the second part we give a canonical interpretation showing exegetically and theologically how we arrive at our position. The last part is a summary of what we consider to be the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage and some concluding remarks.

Background and Context

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

As the last of the five books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy preserves the three covenant addresses Moses delivered just prior to his death and the entry of the Israelites into Canaan.⁴ It is clear that the book of Deuteronomy

¹ Phuong Tran, *Africa/Divorce*, <http://newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.culture.african/2007-03/msg00013.html>

² Phuong Tran, *Africa/Divorce*.

³ Other NT passages on Jesus' teaching on divorce include Matt 5:31-32; Mk 10:2-12; Lk 16:18. These will from time to time be referred to in relation to Matt 19:1-10.

⁴ Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy*, (Maco, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2003): 1.

describes its own contents as the law (תּוֹרָה) – the *torah* (1:5; 4:8; 17:18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26). It gives a restatement of the Mosaic Covenant for the benefit of the second generation of Israelites in the wilderness and it is part of a larger section that expands and applies the basic stipulations of the covenant (5:6-21).⁵ We arrive at this portion of Scripture as the author comes to the subject of divorce law, and he treats divorce as a practice already existing and known by his audience.⁶ By the time of Moses, divorce had become a custom even among Israelites since man had already violated God's standard of one man married to one woman stipulated in Gen. 2:24 and as evidenced elsewhere (4:19). Apparently, divorce was lawful in most Ancient Near Eastern cultures.⁷

The legal case presented in Deut. 24:1-4 is a very special one; it does not deal with divorce in general. The text concerns itself with remarriage after divorce as a way of prohibiting the marriage of a divorced woman to her first husband after already having been remarried to a second husband who either divorced her or he died. According to the passage the husband did three things to effect the divorce: he wrote a bill of divorcement attesting his wish to release her (cf. Jer. 3:8; Is. 50:1); he personally put the bill in her hand; and he formally sent her out of his house (v.1).⁸ This procedure was probably intended to protect the wife since in ancient civilization women were second-class citizens (or property), so that the bill of divorcement would release the woman from further domestic obligations.⁹

Though Deut 24:1-4 refers to divorce as generally practiced in ancient Israel, it does not command or condone divorce,¹⁰ rather it shows that Moses conceded to divorce in certain circumstances.¹¹ In this passage the prohibition only appears at v.4 as a binding legal decision while vv.1-3 are a protasis specifying exactly the conditions that must apply for the execution of the legislation in the apodosis (v.4).¹²

⁵ J. Carl Laney, "Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce". *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 149 no. 593 (Jan-Mar. 1992): 3.

⁶ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976): 305.

⁷ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000): 22.

⁸ See also A.D.H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981): 322.

⁹ Edward Dobson, "Divorce in the Old Testament," *Fundamentalist Journal* 4, no. 9 (1985): 40.

¹⁰ See e.g. Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994): 318.

¹¹ Dobson, *Fundamentalist Journal* (1985): 39.

¹² Some translations (e.g. KJV, ASV of 1901 and ERV) wrongly put the apodosis ("then let him write her a bill of divorcement") at the end of verse 1 which implies that the Law requires that a husband divorce his offending wife.

Matthew 19:1-10

Jesus had just ended his Galilean ministry. In 4:12 he enters the last phase of his life in Jerusalem as he moved toward the cross.¹³ The concluding formula (“when Jesus had finished these sayings”) marks the end of a major discourse and the beginning of another one. Matt. 19:1-10 is part of a larger section (19:1-20:16) that deals with family and possessions in view of the Kingdom of God.¹⁴ The Pharisees begin their testing by questioning Jesus (v.3), to which Jesus responds (vv. 4-6). Then they counter question him (v.7), and again Jesus answers (vv. 8-9). The dialogue ends with the disciples’ reaction in amazement (v.10), and Jesus’ response to their bafflement as a way of explaining himself further (vv. 11-12).

The pericope in Matt. 19:3-9 parallels Mk. 10:2-12 and sustains the tension encountered earlier between Jesus and the religious authorities (cf. 12:14; 15:12) while anticipating the opposition he will encounter in Jerusalem.¹⁵ The Pharisees, who represented the religious establishment of the day, hated Jesus because his teachings were making them unpopular so that they planned to destroy him. They brought up the issue of divorce because it was an area that touched people’s lives deeply.¹⁶ The Pharisees wanted to discredit Jesus with the people for they knew that he did not agree with their view on divorce.¹⁷ They saw here an opportunity to expose what they believed was Jesus’ inconsistency with the Law of Moses.¹⁸ The leaders in religious affairs themselves debated the justifiable grounds for divorce implied in Deut. 24:1-4.¹⁹ According to the Mishna (*Gittin* 9:10), the school of Shammai argued that the passage commanded divorce if one’s spouse was guilty of marital unfaithfulness. The school of Hillel maintained that a man could divorce his wife for whatever displeased him, even for a trivial offense such as burning

¹³ John McArthur, *John McArthur’s Bible Studies On Divorce* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983): 5.

¹⁴ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): 55.

¹⁵ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1995): 546.

¹⁶ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 768.

¹⁷ Before this encounter Jesus had already condemned divorce and remarriage (Matt. 5:31-32). Furthermore, the recent Herodias affair (14:3-14) may have influenced the Pharisees’. See also MacArthur, *Bible Studies On Divorce*, 10; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 289.

¹⁸ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996): 350; Abel Isakson, *Marriage in the New Temple*, Trans. N. Tomkinson and J. Gray, ASNU 24, (Lund: Gleerup; Copenhagen: Munsgaard, 1965): 122.

¹⁹ Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 547, observes that the word “test” (πειράζοντες) is used in Matthew to refer to Pharisees coming to test Jesus on a question they had frequently debated among themselves.

food.²⁰ Since Moses assumed the practice of divorce, to ask whether Jesus thinks divorce is permissible at all is to ask whether he agrees with Moses.²¹

The Interpretation

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

The statute described in this passage concedes to divorce in case the wife loses favor with her husband. The reason for the husband's feelings is that he finds the "nakedness of a thing" or "naked matter" (עֲרוּת דְּבָר) with the wife. The precise meaning of the phrase in Hebrew is uncertain and the Septuagint's translation, "some unbecoming thing" (ἄσχημον πρῶγμα) is equally difficult to understand.²² Nevertheless, our understanding of this phrase is very important to the interpretation of Jesus' exception clause in Matthew 19:9 (i.e. "marital unfaithfulness") since it seems obvious that he had this scripture (i.e. Deut. 24:1-4) in mind.²³

The first time the author of Deuteronomy uses the expression literary rendered "the nakedness of a thing" (עֲרוּת דְּבָר) is in 23:14, where it refers generally to something impure.²⁴ Craigie thinks that it may have been a technical legal expression that in this context indicates some physical deficiency in the woman,²⁵ while Merrill feels that it suggests some shameful or repulsive act such as improper exposure of her private parts.²⁶ Other commentators think the expression implies adultery, though not exclusively.²⁷ Yet some commentators argue that it cannot mean adultery simply because adultery was punishable by death (cf. 22:22) not divorce (24:1).²⁸ But because the phrase is broad enough to include adultery, one cannot limit the עֲרוּת דְּבָר

²⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downer's Grove: IVP, 1993): 96. Rabbi Aqiba added that a woman could be divorced even if her husband found another more beautiful woman. See Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina 1, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991): 275. According to Hughes, this liberal rabbinical school also interpreted 'indecent' to mean a wife's walking around with her hair down, speaking to men in the streets, or speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents in his presence. R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001): 114.

²¹ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 161.

²² Laney, "Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 5.

²³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 291.

²⁴ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC, 305, and Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, NCBC, 322.

²⁵ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT, 305.

²⁶ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC, 317.

²⁷ J. M. Sprinkle, "Sexuality, Sexual Ethics" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003): 744; R.H. Stein, "Divorce" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992): 195.

²⁸ See e.g. S.R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1986): 271.

to anything less than adultery.²⁹ For instance Sprinkle argues that the word “nakedness” is used frequently in an idiom for sexual intercourse.³⁰ Reading Jer. 3:8 makes us believe beyond doubt that Jeremiah also must have understood “nakedness of a thing” in Deuteronomy 24:1 to be applicable to adultery because he applies the law by analogy to the relationship between God and Israel where God, rather than executing Israel for her adulteries, wrote her a “certificate of divorce” and sent her away into exile.³¹ Like Jeremiah, Jesus in Matthew 19:9 seems to have taken עֲרִוּת הַבֵּית as “marital unfaithfulness” which may as well be referred to as adultery.³²

Although it is true that adultery was punishable by death in the Old Testament, there is considerable evidence that the death penalty prescribed in the Torah had in practice been replaced by compulsory divorce.³³

It appears that whereas in theory adulterers were to be put to death by stoning (or burning), in practice other penalties were frequently imposed (cf. Prov. 6:33-35; Hos. 2:3, 10; Ezek. 16:37-39; 23:29). Thus Joseph sought not Mary’s stoning but divorce, when he thought her guilty of adultery (Matt. 1:19; cf. also *Sota* 4:3).³⁴

Thus the passage under consideration stipulates a procedure not to control divorce but remarriage.³⁵ The regulation prohibits the remarriage of a woman to her first husband if she has been married to another man in the interim.³⁶ This is because she has been “defiled” by the second husband and to remarry her would be an abomination to the LORD and it would bring sin in the land since the second marriage is similar to adultery.³⁷ The word “defiled”

²⁹ See e.g. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, NCBC, 322, who wants to limit the expression to denote something short of actual unchastity.

³⁰ Sprinkle, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics” in *DOT: Pentateuch*, 744.

³¹ Sprinkle, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics” in *DOT: Pentateuch*, 744.

³² So Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC, 317; Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 272; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 305;

³³ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 354. So also, Sprinkle, “Sexuality, Sexual Ethics” in *DOT: Pentateuch*, 744, who observes that cases of adultery not proven in court could be a matter of divorce.

³⁴ Stein, “Divorce” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 195.

³⁵ William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984): 107.

³⁶ This law is also indicated by the parallel in Jer. 3:1-5.

³⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT, 305; Laney, “Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce”, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 8. But Heth and Wenham argue that the second marriage is perfectly legal and it cannot be the one regarded as defiling the woman. See, Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 108. See also J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1974), 244, who sees some value in the proposal that these laws were intended to preserve the second marriage.

(נִטְמָא) means “to be made unclean” or “to be touched by uncleanness”³⁸ and in Lev. 18:20 and Num. 5:13-14 it is used of the defilement of adultery.³⁹ Thus as Weibling contends, the issue in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was not adultery upon divorce, but adultery during the consummation of the second marriage.⁴⁰ This interpretation is consistent with the New Testament teaching where remarriage is placed at par with adultery (see Mk. 10:11-12).⁴¹

The reason for the prohibition stated in Deut. 24:4 was the abomination which would bring sin in the land. Thus the entire regulation concerns a patriarchal judgment about protecting the purity of the land of promise.⁴² The idea that unchastity defiled the land is found in several other passages in the Old Testament (e.g. Lev. 18:25, 28; 19:29; Nu. 5:3; Jer. 3:2, 9; Ho. 4:3).⁴³ Like Adam, Israel is given rules by which the garden land and/or God’s presence are to be enjoyed.⁴⁴ Dumbrell is worth quoting at this juncture.

By means of such references [Deut 7:14; 11:11-12. cf. 6.10-11, 8:7] the concept of the land as “Eden regained” comes through strongly. This is in keeping with the expectation voiced in Ex. 15:17-18 that the land is God’s sanctuary, in which Israel is in effect continually at worship. Everything that threatens to pollute must certainly be removed, for god and Israel inhabit together.⁴⁵

The only way God’s presence would be maintained in the land by His covenant people was through shunning evil, and it was God’s presence that made Israel different from other nations. God required more from them because they had a special place before Him. So for example although Israel practiced divorce just like any other culture in the Ancient Near East, people outside Israel obtained divorce more easily.⁴⁶ In Assyria, it was a man’s right to divorce his wife even without providing her with a settlement, and men in Egypt and Mesopotamia could divorce their wives for almost any reason.⁴⁷ In contrast, no Old Testament law or oracle institutes divorce, and Deuteronomy 24:1-4 had the effect of making divorce a more serious issue for Israel

³⁸ William L. Holladay, ed. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988): 124.

³⁹ Generally, נִטְמָא is used of sexual, or religious or cultic uncleanness. See Holladay, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 124.

⁴⁰ James M. Weibling, “Reconciling Matthew and Mark on Divorce,” *Trinity Journal* 27 NS (2001): 233.

⁴¹ Laney, “Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and the Issue of Divorce”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1992): 14.

⁴² Walter Brueggeman, *Deuteronomy*, Old Testament Commentaries, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001): 236.

⁴³ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, TOTC, 244.

⁴⁴ William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament*, (Homebush West, Australia: Lancer Books, 1985): 135.

⁴⁵ Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning*, 134.

⁴⁶ Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, TOTC, 244.

⁴⁷ Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 196.

because they were his covenant people. This is true today for true Israel, the New Creation. As House observes, Jesus, offering what he considers the proper application of Mosaic writings on divorce and remarriage, “reaffirms the importance of marital permanence in the covenant community”.⁴⁸

Matthew 19:1-12

It is clear that the issue for which the Pharisees confront Jesus in Matthew 19 is not divorce, rather the justifiable grounds for divorce. As noted earlier, this was an important topic in the intra-Pharisaic debate between the schools of Shammai and Hillel. Their first question to Jesus is whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason (v.3). The words *κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν* can either be translated as “for every reason whatever” or “for any reason (at all)”, but context favors the former.⁴⁹ This phrase (*for every reason whatever*) is missing in the parallel passage in Mark’s gospel. It is probable that Matthew deliberately adds it to bring the question of divorce more closely into the realm of strict legal discussion than Mark.⁵⁰ He moves the Pharisees’ question from one about the lawfulness (*ἐξεστίν*) of divorce to one about the cause (*αἰτία*) for divorce.⁵¹ Apparently, the debate hinged on the question of the exegesis of the expression “anything indecent” (*כְּרוֹתוֹת הַבְּרִיּוֹת*, “the nakedness of a thing”) in Deuteronomy 24:1.⁵² The Shammaites, placing the emphasis on “indecent,” took the phrase to refer to sexual unfaithfulness. The Hillelites, placing the emphasis on “anything”, allowed divorce even for a minor misdemeanor.⁵³

Intriguingly in his response Jesus goes beyond the Law of Moses and the Shammai-Hillel debate to a creation ordinance (4-6).⁵⁴ The introductory formula “haven’t you read that ...” (*οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ὅτι*) clearly implies that Jesus is about to quote an Old Testament writing. Just like Mark, Matthew connects Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 via “and he said” (*καὶ εἶπεν*) so that Gen. 2:24 is a pronouncement by God himself in which he demonstrates the meaning of his creative deeds.⁵⁵ “The creator” (*ὁ κτίσας*, lit. “the one having created”) did

⁴⁸ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998): 191.

⁴⁹ Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 547.

⁵⁰ Duane Warden, “The Words of Jesus on Divorce,” *Restoration Quarterly* 39, no.3 (1997): 145. This position assumes Markan priority, which implies that Matthew had Mark’s gospel as one of his sources.

⁵¹ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagna, 273.

⁵² LXX: (*ἄσχημον πράγμα*), lit. “some unbecoming thing.”

⁵³ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 289.

⁵⁴ A creation ordinance is an appeal to some facet of creation before the fall to support a NT speaker’s or writer’s perspective equally appropriate in this new age. For this definition see G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, ed. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 59, who also observe that this is the first instance of a creation ordinance in Matthew.

⁵⁵ Piet Farla, “The Two Shall Become One Flesh”: Gen. 1:27 and 2:24 in the New Testament Marriage Texts” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writing: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*. Edited by Sipke Draisma, (Kampen: Kok, 1989): 71.

“from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) make them male and female (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς),⁵⁶ thus designating them to complement each other to the point that they constitute one complete being, “one flesh” (σάρκα μίαν).⁵⁷ Verse 6a makes it clear that this creation ordinance remains in effect even after the fall of the human race, the giving of the Law and the coming of the Kingdom with Jesus.⁵⁸ Even when the Pharisees brought up Deuteronomy 24:1, claiming that “Moses commanded” (ἐνετείλατο) divorce (v.7), Jesus’ response was basically the same (v.8) in that he referred them to the original intent of God. He insisted that it was not so “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς),⁵⁹ rather “Moses permitted” (ἐπέτρεψεν)⁶⁰ divorce because of the people’s hardheartedness (σκληροκαρδίαν).⁶¹ The σκληροκαρδι- (*hard-hearted*) root is found five times in the LXX (Dt. 10:16; Pr. 17:20; Jer. 4:4; Eze. 3:7; Sir. 16:10). According to Luz σκληροκαρδίαν is a wisdom term that refers to the inner dimension of sin, reflects unwillingness to repent, or stubbornness.⁶² Divorce therefore is a result of man’s utter disobedience to his creator. It is not in accord with God’s original design and should not happen.

What we see here is Jesus’ redemption beginning the process of reversing the curse of God on all creation, so that marriage in the New Creation will reflect God’s original intent in creation.⁶³ In salvation history, redemption is always subordinate to creation in that it is the means of reintroducing the conditions of the New Creation. Essentially, all events since the fall are to be seen as a process leading to the reintroduction of the original creation,⁶⁴ that is, restoration.⁶⁵ Since, according to the Old Testament

⁵⁶ ὁ κτίσας occurs only here in Matthew. ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς (Gen. 1:27) occurs almost verbatim in LXX and is cited in CD 4:21 in an argument against polygamy. In the NT, apart from the Gospels (Matthew and Mark), this verse (Gen. 2:24) is cited again in Eph. 5:31.

⁵⁷ Paul seems to interpret “one flesh” as sexual intercourse in 1 Cor. 6:16.

⁵⁸ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 290.

⁵⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006): 489, observes that the expression “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) often refers biblically to creation or to the beginning of salvation history, and it emphasizes the special authority of the statement that follows it.

⁶⁰ Here Jesus replaces “Moses commanded” (ἐνετείλατο) with “Moses permitted” (ἐπέτρεψεν). Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 774, argues that the latter reflects the actual syntax of Dt. 24:1-4.

⁶¹ This is the only occurrence of the word in Matthew.

⁶² Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, 490.

⁶³ Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*, 59.

⁶⁴ G.K. Beale, “The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology,” *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in the Bible*. Edited by K.E. Browner and M.W. Elliot (Leicester: IVP Apollos, 1997): 22.

⁶⁵ Messianic restoration is prophesied by Isaiah (Is. 43, 65-66), for instance, where God is portrayed as “creating”, “forming”, or “making” Israel.

prophets, restoration would involve the heart (Eze. 36:26; cf. 18:31; Jer. 32:39, 24:7), here Jesus, according to Nolland, calls to mind the hardheartedness of the generation of the Exile.⁶⁶ Perhaps Matthew wants his readers to note that Jesus has come to address the problem of the heart, a problem that the Law of Moses could not successfully deal with.

Verse 9 is probably the most problematic of all the verses in the pericope. The syntactical and lexical difficulties inherent in the expression “except for marital unfaithfulness” (μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ) have attracted considerable scholarly attention. The phrase does not appear in the parallel passage in Mk. 10:11-12 and in Lk. 16:18. It is the equivalent of the phrase “except on the ground of sexual immorality” (παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας), which is found in Matthew 5:32. Most scholars maintain that this exception clause is an insertion, an addition, by the evangelist to the words of Jesus in his adaptation of the church’s tradition.⁶⁷ However, it is more probable that the exception clause originated with Jesus.⁶⁸ To think that it was a mere insertion is, as Vawter puts it, plain arbitrariness.⁶⁹ The authenticity of the clause is evidenced by the fact that all of the ancient manuscripts have it.

Another problem is to determine whether the clause should be interpreted exceptively (“if a man divorces his wife, except if she has been unfaithful”),⁷⁰ inclusively (if a man divorces his wife, even if she has been unfaithful),⁷¹ or exclusively (“if a man divorces his wife, unfaithfulness (πορνεία) is a separate issue”).⁷² The evidence from context favors the exceptive interpretation.⁷³ One of the reasons is that it seems natural for Jesus to respond by mentioning his view on the ground for divorce because that was the cardinal point in the legal discussions in Jesus’ day as evidenced by the Pharisees’ question (v.3). To say that Matthew simply attributed his own practice to Jesus raises more questions since one finds it difficult to see how the proposition fits the context of 5:32 where Jesus insists that he came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it

⁶⁶ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 774.

⁶⁷ Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*. Hermeneia, 492; Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 353.

⁶⁸ So Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 292.

⁶⁹ Bruce Vawter, “The Divorce Clauses in Mt 5:32 and 19:9,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 16 (1954): 159.

⁷⁰ Where μὴ ἐπὶ is translated as “except for”. See e.g. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 292; Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 549.

⁷¹ Where μὴ ἐπὶ is translated as “even not outside (apart from) the case of” i.e. “even inclusive of the case of”.

⁷² Where μὴ ἐπὶ is translated as “even for” or “not considering the case of πορνεία”. See e.g. Allen R. Guenther, “The Exception Phrases: Except, Including, or Excluding? (Matthew 5:32; 19:9),” *Tyndale Bulletin* 53, no. 1(2002): 92-96.

⁷³ Warden, “The Words of Jesus on Divorce”, 147. For a detailed treatment of each of the three positions, see Vawter, “The Divorce Clauses in Mt 5:32 and 19:9”, 157-165.

more effectively.⁷⁴ As indicated above, we take the two exception clauses, μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ and παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας to be identical and original.⁷⁵ In addition, the exception clause is a fair translation of עֲרֹוּת דְּבָרִים, (lit. “the nakedness of a thing”) of Deuteronomy 24:1 which, as stated above, most commentators believe Jesus is here alluding to.⁷⁶

However some scholars see some weaknesses in taking the exception clause as original. Hagner, for instance, has this to say:

The Matthean addition of the exception clause (cf. the absolute statement of Mark 10:11 and Luke 16:18) has the effect of making Jesus side with the Shammaites, i.e., the divorce was allowable in cases of sexual misconduct. The addition not only softens the ethics of the kingdom, but it also stands in tension with the absolutism of v 6, weakens the argument of vv 7-8, and makes the disciples' comment in v 10 and Jesus' statements in v 11-12 less appropriate than they would be in case of an absolute prohibition of divorce.⁷⁷

But the truth is, although Jesus allows an exception that apparently parallels the view of the Shammaites, he never requires divorce even in the case of marital unfaithfulness.⁷⁸ His pronouncement against remarriage further proves that his overall approach to divorce and remarriage is even more conservative than any of the Jewish parties of his day.⁷⁹ We can also infer from the Pharisees' remarks (vv. 10, 25) that they realized how much Jesus' point of view differed from theirs. It should be noted further that Jesus uses an emphatic, “But I say to you” (λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν) to expressly present his pronouncement as exceeding the teaching of Moses himself. It is therefore clear that here and in the dichotomy of 5:31 ff., “It has been said . . . but I say to you,” an old and a new revelation are implied, which clearly underlines the restoration motif in Jesus' words on divorce and remarriage.

But did Jesus really prohibit remarriage? Again scholars differ. Some say remarriage is completely out of bounds for both parties, while others say only the innocent party can remarry in the case of adultery.⁸⁰ There are still other

⁷⁴ Vawter, “The Divorce Clauses in Mt 5:32 and 19:9”, 163.

⁷⁵ So Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 292; Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 549.

⁷⁶ This is true especially in Mark's παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας. See Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 775.

⁷⁷ Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 549.

⁷⁸ Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*, 59.

⁷⁹ Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the NT Use of the OT*, 59. For instance the Pharisees took the right of remarriage after divorce as a matter of course. They also understood Moses to have “commanded” divorce in case of marital unfaithfulness whereas Jesus took it as mere permission (p. 61).

⁸⁰ See e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 549, and McArthur, *Bible Studies On Divorce*, 49; Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 292, respectively.

commentators who feel that either party has the right to remarry.⁸¹ For the most part, the problem is in determining what the exception clause (19:9) modifies in the sentence. Those who believe in no remarriage at all take the exception clause as modifying the verb “divorce” (ἀπολύση) only, and the ones who argue for remarriage for the innocent partner take the clause as qualifying both the verbs “divorce” (ἀπολύση) and “marries” (γαμήση). Yet there are variations on all these views and the present study is not intended to deal with them in detail.⁸²

But we argue that Jesus clearly taught against divorce for reasons other than “marital unfaithfulness” [πορνεία]⁸³ and remarriage.⁸⁴ In both Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 Jesus states that divorce and remarriage constitute adultery and should not be practiced.⁸⁵ No exception is allowed in either of these statements. Jesus says the same thing concerning remarriage in Matthew 5:32, “whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (no exception). Thus, while divorce can be (not “should be”) allowed in a case of sexual sin, remarriage following divorce should never happen.⁸⁶ This teaching as a whole reflects Jesus’ interpretation of Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, that is, God’s original design is that marriage should be a lifelong relationship

⁸¹ Larry Richards, “Divorce and Remarriage Under a Variety of Circumstances” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990): 244. He states, “a person whose first marriage has ended has a right to remarry” only that they should not rush too soon into a new relationship. So also Stein, “Divorce” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 193.

⁸² For a detailed analysis of positions and their variations see Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 153-197; Vawter, “The Divorce Clauses in Mt 5:32; 19:9” 156-165.

⁸³ Although there is a separate Greek word for “adultery” (i.e., μοιχάω), πορνεία is assumed here to refer to adultery or related sexual sins. See Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 292. Again, commentators translate the word πορνεία in a number of different other ways, e.g. “premarital sexual intercourse” and “incestuous marriage” (Lev. 18). See e.g. Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 113-20.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC, 549.

⁸⁵ Paul also seems to indicate that married people should not divorce, and if they do, they should remain single the rest of their life unless they are willing to be reconciled to their partner (1 Cor. 7:10-11).

⁸⁶ The NT recognizes two grounds for the dissolution of a marriage that may warrant remarriage: death of a partner (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:2-3) and desertion by an unbelieving partner (1 Cor. 7:15). We take the statement “she is not bound” (δέδεταί) in 1 Cor. 7:15 to mean “not compelled to comply with the law of no remarriage.” For a view that takes marriage as absolutely indissoluble by divorce (whether due to unchastity or other seeming grounds), and remarriage as incestuous, see William A. Heth, “Divorce, But No Remarriage” in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990): 93-114. However, some commentators feel that Scripture allows remarriage. Hughes gives three instances warranting divorce and remarriage: sexual immorality, desertion by an unbelieving spouse, and if married and divorced before coming to Christ. Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 120.

between one man and one woman who become one body. Consequently, Matthew and Mark, according to Hays, assign positive significance to the renunciation of divorce [and remarriage] as a sign of the new creation.⁸⁷ Also according to Myles Munroe,

Jesus is introducing the world to a new kingdom – a new government. So what He is dealing with in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5,6, and 7) are the changes in attitude and behavior necessary to live and function in the new kingdom.⁸⁸

Conclusion

It is clear that the Old Testament takes for granted the writing of certificates of divorce (Deut. 24:1-4). By the time of Jesus the Jewish teachers of the Law prescribed divorce for various reasons as if the Law of Moses commanded it. Jesus strongly forbade people to divorce their wives or husbands⁸⁹ (except for marital unfaithfulness) and to remarry. He therefore stated a new perspective on divorce and remarriage and gave the reasons for both the old and the new perspectives. The reason for the old view that allowed for divorce was the sinfulness of mankind, and the reason for the new perspective is that it is God's original design. In this case Jesus pointed back to the pre-Fall era to express what the will of God was when he created man and woman. Commenting on Mark and Matthew's understanding about marriage and on Jesus' reference to original creation, Hays says,

Mark, by pointing back behind the Mosaic Law to God's original design, dares to suggest that through unwavering faithfulness to the one flesh union of marriage, Jesus' disciples embody *new creation*, manifesting what was meant to be "from the beginning of creation". Likewise, Matthew's placement of the teaching against divorce in the Sermon on the Mount makes this point with unmistakable clarity: the *polis* on a hill is a sign of hope for the world. In a community with such a sign-bearing vocation, divorce has no place. Matthew's exception clause, however, is a clear concession to the "not yet": until the kingdom arrives in its fullness.⁹⁰

On the same note Blomberg contends that God "did not originally create people to divorce each other, and he therefore does not intend for those whom he re-creates - the community of Jesus' followers - to practice divorce".⁹¹ He

⁸⁷ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 366.

⁸⁸ Myles Munroe, *Single, Married, Separated, and Life After Divorce* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2003): 74.

⁸⁹ The fifth-century B.C. Jewish marriage contracts from Elephantine, Egypt, indicate that a woman could divorce her husband. See Sprinkle, "Sexuality, Sexual Ethics" in *DOT: Pentateuch*, 743.

⁹⁰ Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 366

⁹¹ Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 291.

says that, as in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims a higher standard of righteousness for his followers than the Law of Moses.⁹²

It is probably harder to observe Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage today than at any other time in Christian history. Today believers, particularly in North America, are divorcing at a rate that is at par with that of unbelievers.⁹³ Since the 1990s the divorce rate has stabilized at 50%, and about 75% percent of those who divorce later remarry!⁹⁴ Heth recounts that pastors tell him that most of the requests for divorce and remarriage they encounter do not fall under the adultery and desertion exceptions allowed by the most popular evangelical view.⁹⁵ One of the factors contributing to this terrible situation is that the Church's teaching on divorce and remarriage is not in harmony with Scripture. Pastors are not addressing the issue as they should because some spiritual leaders themselves are not practicing God's Word on this matter. No wonder, "Those who are in ministry are 'equally likely to have their marriage end in divorce' as general church members."⁹⁶ It should therefore not surprise us to learn that the clergy has the second highest divorce rate among all professions!⁹⁷

Like Erasmus, some exegetes are opting for a humanistic reading of Scripture.⁹⁸ The temporal happiness and well being of individuals is given priority over obedience to the Word of God. Given the fact that this generation is very sexually promiscuous, lowering the standard of marriage only worsens the moral situation in the Church and the world at large. For instance, *Christianity Today*, one of the most popular Christian magazines in North America and internationally, published an article ("What God Has Joined: What does the Bible Really Teach?") by David Instone-Brewer in October 2007.⁹⁹ In his article Instone-Brewer complains that to tell people that they should not divorce and remarry except in cases of adultery, desertion by an

⁹² Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 291.

⁹³ H. Wayne House, "Introduction" in *Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views*, ed. H. Wayne House, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990): 9.

⁹⁴ David H. Olson and John DeFrain, *Marriage and the Family: Diversity and Strengths* (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1990): 13.

⁹⁵ Heth, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 118.

⁹⁶ H. B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, California: Regal, 2003): 84.

⁹⁷ London and Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk*, 86. Hence the authors warn, "Pastors must restore authority of God's Word in their own house before we can ever hope to see righteousness in the Church House."

⁹⁸ Out of a concern for the salvation of people seemingly bound by ecclesiastical legalism, Erasmus argued for a more charitable reading of the Gospel concerning divorce and remarriage. This approach went contrary to the tradition of the early Church Fathers who held almost unanimously that remarriage after divorce is adulterous. See Heth and Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce*, 45-72.

⁹⁹ David Instone-Brewer, "What God Has Joined: What does the Bible Really Teach?" *Christianity Today*, October 2007.

unbelieving partner, or widowhood seems so impractical and cruel. Instead he contends that biblically one is allowed to divorce even for emotional or physical neglect. Using extra-biblical rabbinic sources and Ex. 21:10-11,¹⁰⁰ he argues that divorce is allowed when one is denied of his/her rights to food, clothing, and love by the spouse. If Jesus acknowledged this kind of divorce,¹⁰¹ one wonders why the disciples would respond in amazement and then utter in frustration that it was better not to marry (v. 10). Context and canonical consideration lead to an understanding that sees Jesus as presenting a high standard for marriage. His perspective reflects a call for the people of the Kingdom, the New Creation, to do the perfect will of God whatever the cost, thus distinguishing them from the rest of the world.

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¹⁰⁰ Apparently this OT reference is a unique context that cannot apply to all situations of divorce. It is about a female slave who has been sold to a master, probably by her parents, in hopes that one day the master might marry her.

¹⁰¹ Instone-Brewer claims that Jesus "did not reject" divorce for physical or emotional neglect.

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The Pedagogy of Sexual Morality in Proverbs Five

by Kojo Okyere

Abstract

The book of Proverbs is an ancient testimony to the subject of education in ancient Israel. Several scholars have explored this interesting, yet relatively new current in biblical scholarship on the book of Proverbs. Scholarly interest in the pedagogy of Proverbs includes discerning the general pedagogical principles that lie within the book's sayings. Few studies have examined how these principles apply to specific topics in Proverbs. This paper examines the teaching and learning of sexual morality in Proverbs 5. The paper argues that several pedagogical principles, such as the need for attention on the part of the learner, the good relationship between the teacher and the student, the commitment to acquire knowledge and make it practical, and openness in teaching about sexual morality, are relevant for modern teachers and students who struggle with the subject of sexual morality, including in Africa.

Introduction

Over the last few years, several articles and books have drawn attention to the pedagogical strategies contained in the book of Proverbs.¹ Using Proverbs 2, Fox reveals the intricate demands on both the teacher and the student in the learning process.² Believing that the pedagogical elements in Proverbs are scattered throughout the book, Estes uses Prov. 1-9 as a base to explore its pedagogical categories in order to synthesize the pedagogical theory embedded in the text.³ Bland analyses the formation of character in ancient Israel as testified by Proverbs.⁴ Jones also compares the pedagogy of Prov. 7 with that of the Qumran text, 4Q184.⁵ Yoder uses repetition and contradictions to illustrate the nature and process of pedagogy in Proverbs.⁶

¹ See, for example, M.V. Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," *JBL* 113 (1994): 233-243; James L. Crenshaw, "The Acquisition of Knowledge in Israelite Wisdom Literature," *Word and World* 7:3 (1987): 245-252; C.F. Melchert, *Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Education Ministry* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998).

² Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 233-243.

³ Daniel J. Estes, *Hear My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000).

⁴ Dave Bland, "The Formation of Character in the Book of Proverbs" *Restoration Quarterly*, 40.4 (1998): 221-237.

⁵ Scott C. Jones, "Wisdom's Pedagogy: A Comparison of Proverbs 7 and 4Q184" *IJIM Magazine*, October 29-November 4, (2001): 1-20.

⁶ Christine Roy Yoder, "Forming 'Fearers of Yahweh': Repetition and Contradictions as Pedagogy in Proverbs," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, eds. R.L. Troxel, K.G. Friebel; D.R. Magary (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 167-184.

These studies lay bare what perhaps is the obvious goal of Proverbs: to teach its readers what is right and should be done and what is wrong and should be avoided. However, this is no mean target, since what Proverbs ultimately aims at is the moral character of the student. But as Fox rightly points out, “moral character comes down to desiring the right things, and how can we teach desire?”⁷ Prov. 5 is a good example of teaching students about how to learn to control desire. This paper examines how the teacher of Prov. 5 seeks to convince the student to rightly manage his sexual desires. While several studies on Proverbs explore general principles of pedagogy as discernible in the book, this paper concentrates on how the pedagogical principles are typified in the specific case of teaching about sexual morality.

Pericope and Structure of Proverbs Five

Proverbs 5 falls under the larger pericope of Prov. 1-9, which is an introduction to the entire book of Proverbs. Fox divides Prov. 1-9 into two main parts: lectures and interludes.⁸ Prov. 5 is a lecture and dwells on the topic of the threat of the seductive woman, a topic first raised in Prov. 2:16-19. However, in Prov. 5 the topic receives extensive attention because of the degree of temptation offered by the seductive woman. It is the eighth wisdom lecture and the most extensive lecture after Prov. 2:1-22. McKane questions its literary unity by positing that vv. 21-23 are loosely attached to the preceding units.⁹ Others such as Scott, Skehan and Goldingay have also put forward suggestions for rearrangements within the chapter, but these are not compelling.¹⁰

Each lecture has three main divisions: exordium¹¹, lesson, and conclusion. However, each lecture uses unique features to present its message. In Prov. 5, for instance, the address to the audience “my son(s)” is used three times.¹² Interestingly, each of the three divisions contains one occurrence and this points to the central place of attention in any pedagogical act. The design of the text is as follows:

⁷ Fox, “Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9.” *JBL* 116 (1997), 620.

⁸ Fox, “Ideas of Wisdom,” 614.

⁹ William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 313.

¹⁰ R. E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 22 (Dallas: Word Books, 2002), 31.

¹¹ The *exordium* is the first of seven parts of a classical oration and is designed to introduce the subject and catch the hearers’ attention. In this it is comparable to some Pauline introductions, such as Gal. 1:6-10. F.B. Huey, Jr. and Bruce Corley, *A Student’s Dictionary for Biblical and Theological Studies: A Handbook of Special and Technical Terms*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 77.

¹² In the ten lectures, it is only in lectures three, eight and ten that more than one use of the address to the audience occurs.

Exordium

vv. 1-2: an exhortation to the son to pay attention

Lesson

vv. 3-6: teaching about the seductress¹³

vv. 7-14: an exhortation to avoid the seductress

vv. 15-19: an encouragement to love one's own wife

Conclusion

vv. 20-23: the fate of anyone who refuses wisdom

Prov. 5 advances one basic argument about the seductress: that she is tempting and has to be avoided. The best way to avoid her is for the son to find pleasure in his own wife. Chisholm has subjected vv. 15-23 to an exhaustive literary analysis and reveals the rich diversity of Hebrew prosody at work in the text.¹⁴ This paper examines the entire text in order to ascertain the ingenuity of the Israelite sages as revealed in their literary heritage in addressing the issue of sexual morality.

The Teaching and Learning of Sexual Morality

Exordium

Like all lectures, the exordium of Prov. 5 is tripartite. The address, "*my son*", is followed by an exhortation for the son to be attentive to wisdom, "*pay attention to my wisdom and incline your ear to my understandings*" (v.1). Third is a motive clause indicating the value of the teaching to the son, "*that you may be able to exercise discretion and guard knowledge with your lips*" (v.2).

Here, *attention* emerges as a primary ingredient in teaching and learning. Fox explains that the father's exhortation demands from the son "not only attention but a certain attitude, an eager receptivity toward the teachings."¹⁵ What Fox means is that the son must become interested in learning. Attention and interest are inter-connected and mutually dependent, since the motive governing one's attention is interest, and that can only be satisfied if one attends to the object of interest.

However, we wonder what the object of the son's interest is, since the subject matter is not raised until v.3. When the exordium is closely observed, it posits interest in the acquisition of knowledge as an elementary step in learning. Thus the son is exhorted to pay attention to the immediate instruction, as well as to take an interest in the general quest for knowledge.

¹³ The choice to translate the word "*zārāh*" as "seductress" is because of the inappropriateness of the choice "stranger" or "strange woman", which is indeed closer to what the Hebrew means. While the meanings "stranger" and "strange woman" carry a broad meaning that does not necessarily indicate moral laxity, the meaning "seductress" is specific and direct in its reference.

¹⁴ R. B. Chisholm, "'Drink Water From Your Own Cistern': A Literary Study of Proverbs 5:15-23" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 397-409.

¹⁵ Fox, "The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2," 237.

This explains why the motive clause of v. 2 gives a generic motivation, and is not specifically focused on sexual morality. The clause posits a practical guideline in that it requires the son “to judge a situation and discern the proper course of action ... and to act according to what he or she has spoken.”¹⁶ The exordium, therefore, establishes the claim that learning (in this case acquiring wisdom) is not limited to theoretical knowledge. Instead the student has to put what he or she learns into practice and be successful at it. Then the goal for teaching and learning is achieved.

Another important pedagogical element in the exordium is the figure of the father or teacher. He is the agent of control as he works within a hierarchy of control (i.e. father > son/sons > strange woman > wife).¹⁷ He bears the responsibility for the pedagogy with which he instructs his son.¹⁸ Thus he begins the lesson; and his instructions contain the volitives “pay attention” (*qāšav*) and “incline” (*nātāah*). He also claims possession of the wisdom he is imparting to the son - “my wisdom” and “my understanding” (v.1). His pedagogical rhetoric seeks to guide the son’s desire by fostering the right ones, and suppressing the wrong ones.¹⁹

Lesson

The lesson forms the greatest part of the text (vv.6-19). It also has a tripartite division (vv.3-6; 7-14; 15-19) and introduces two characters, the seductress and the wife. While the first two divisions focus on the son and the seductress, the last dwells on the son and the wife. Here again, McKane finds a disjunction between the exordium and the lesson, as he believes the subject matter of the lesson is not hinted at in the exordium.²⁰ However, this observation is not entirely correct because a careful inspection reveals a link between the two. First, the particle “for” (*kī*) which begins the lesson links it to the exordium. In this case the particle introduces reason or motivation and signals emphasis. In this function, *kī* initiates the student to the issue at stake, the lesson to be learnt. Second, the word “lips” (*sāfāh*), which appears in vv.2-3, implicitly links the exordium to the lesson. When the word first appears in v.2, it is the lips of the son that are to guide him to proper speech (or possibly proper response or answer). In v.3 it is the lips of the seductress that drip with honey. While the seductress uses words to entice the son, the son is called upon to use words of wisdom to protect himself against her.²¹

¹⁶ Leo G. Perdue, *Proverbs. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 119.

¹⁷ Cf. Jones, “Wisdom’s Pedagogy,” 4.

¹⁸ McKane, *Proverbs*, 313

¹⁹ Fox, “Ideas of Wisdom,” 621.

²⁰ McKane, *Proverbs*, 311.

²¹ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1964), 69. T. Habtu, “Proverbs” in T. Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi and Grand Rapids: WordAlive and Zondervan, 2006), 754, also links *lips* in vv. 2-3.

The first part of the lesson (vv.3-6) dwells on the seductress. It begins with her superficial offer (v.3), then moves to the deadly effects of her offer (vv.4-5), and ends with a commentary that gives the rationale for her fatal ways (v.6). The opening of the unit begins with the particle “for” (*ki*). This introduces the argument and prompts the student to pay close attention to the teaching.

Right from the beginning, the teacher appeals to the sensuality of the student through the use of words such as “lips” dripping with “honey” and “palate” smoother than “oil” to describe the seductress (v.3). Her lubricious and seductive speech, as the teacher points out, draws her victim irresistibly towards mystery and excitement. Thus one easily enters into her company. The language used is explicitly erotic and probably functions as a double entendre. Watson, for instance, thinks that “lips” most likely refers doubly to lips with which she speaks and to her pudenda.²² Clearly the teacher does not shy away from engaging the student in a frank and open manner.

V.4 opens with the conjunction “but” alerting the student to the fact that there is more to the story of the seductress. Her end is “bitter” (*mārāh*) and the bitterness is as grave as “wormwood” (*la’ānāh*).²³ Again, she is as sharp as a double-edged sword. Thus the “honey” she offers becomes “wormwood” and her smooth “oil” entraps. Eventually, she is a bundle of deceit. The emphasis given to the phrase “but her end” (*wē’ahārītāh*) by its primary position, signals the teacher’s interest in the repercussions one is likely to face after submitting to the seductress. Fox rightly explains that the “teacher in Prov. 5 is concerned not with the end awaiting the woman - that would be no deterrent to the audience - but with the bitter fate she brings upon the youth who gives in to her lures.²⁴ Accordingly, v.5 focuses on death as the ultimate end she offers. The teacher rounds off the first part of the lesson in v.6.²⁵ Here he explains the rationale for the ways of the seductress - she does not chart the path of her life wisely and her ways wander because of her ignorance. However, her ignorance cannot be attributed to naiveté or true ignorance of guilt. She deliberately chooses evil courses, but she does not give thought to where they lead.²⁶

²² W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 247.

²³ Wormwood is a plantlike shrub with a bitter taste growing in Palestine, (cf. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 32).

²⁴ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 192.

²⁵ V.6 can be read as the student being the subject of the verbs “lest you ponder” (*pen’ tēfallēs*) and “you know” (*tēdā’*) or the seductress as the subject. I follow the reading of Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 193, who explains that the strange woman has been the object of discussion in the unit and remains so in the verse, see also McKane, *Proverbs*, 315 who shares similar views.

²⁶ Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 194.

Temptation and destruction emerge as the main concern in the above unit. This information on the seductress is an important step in the learning process. It is the base from which the student extracts the lesson. Accordingly, it provides the basic elements of the lesson as well as the interrelationships among such concepts as life and death. Such a foundation is needed in order to acquaint the student with the subject matter. It is worth noting that the teacher does not demand here an avoidance of the seductress or an application of what has been communicated. He avoids the explicit use of imperatives because the student is at the acquisition stage of learning. Thus, although the exordium placed emphasis on the practical ends of learning, the teacher also understands learning as a process. Therefore it would be wrong to demand application when presentation of knowledge and its comprehension have not taken place.

The second unit in the lesson (vv.7-14) begins with the repetition of the exhortatory formula, “*And now my sons listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth*” (v.7).²⁷ The opening “*and now*” (*wě’atāh*) serves as a transition from the description of the seductress to the call for attention. It introduces a shift in the argument, although there is continuity in the subject and reference.²⁸ The use of repetition reminds the student that learning includes imbibing and absorbing the words of the teacher. However, the teacher is not only interested in having the student memorize oral instruction. He is also interested in having the student engage his mind, and learn the art of discernment. Since the discerning student is the one who develops a “listening ear” (cf. Prov. 25:12), the teacher repeats the call to attention.

Another import of the repetition is to emphasize the gravity of the lesson to follow.²⁹ This accounts for the change in the nature of instruction from v.8 onwards. While the first part of the lesson (vv.3-6) was primarily informative, this time the teacher combines directives with information. In v.8, for instance, he demands a definite course of action from the student; “*Keep far your way from her*” and “*do not go near the door of her house*”. The noun “your way” (*darkekā*) represents, on one hand, the road one travels on (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 23:20), and on the other, the course of human conduct or the manner of life that one lives (cf. Ex. 18:20; Num. 22:32). Both nuances are intended in the teacher’s instruction. The student is directed to avoid and possibly flee from the loose woman. We see here an allusion to the encounter between Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, where the former ran away from the latter as fast as he

²⁷ The change from “my son” to “my sons” means that the message is intended for all young men; see Fox, *Proverbs 1-9*, 194.

²⁸ B.K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-15. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 311.

²⁹ R.N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs, The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 36.

could (cf. Gen. 39). The piling up of imperatives in this unit signals that the student is now at the stage where he can apply what has been learnt.

Vv.9-14 details the consequences of the failure to avoid the seductress. Unlike the warnings in vv.3-6, the thoughts of vv.9-14 are concrete.³⁰ They specifically address two things - the personal losses of the student and his state of regret. On the losses, the teacher lists four consequences. The first is dishonour, "*lest you give your honour to others*" (v.9a). The second is wasted labour, "*and your years to the cruel one*" (v.9b). The third is loss of wealth and possibly debt, "*lest strangers be filled with your strength and your labours go to an alien's house*" (v.10). The last is disease, "*and you groan in the end when your flesh and body are consumed*" (v.11). These losses are all personal and derived directly from associating with a woman who is "strange" (*zārāh*), here with the meaning of being forbidden to the student.

After enumerating the personal losses, the teacher moves on to the psychological turmoil the student goes through. The teacher's strategy is to intensify the bitter end in store for the young man who listens to the seductress. The device of imagined soliloquy clearly dramatizes the student's regret.³¹ This device, in which the student speaks in the first person, makes the student the direct agent for the negative actions enumerated; "*I hated instructions ... my heart despised reproof*" (v.12); "*I did not listen to the voice of my teachers nor incline my ear to my instructors*" (v.13). Like an epiphany, the "I" comes to terms with his self-destruction (v.14).

It is important to note that the shift from the second person to the first is a technique the teacher uses not to only heighten the interest of the student, but to also accentuate his sense of personal responsibility. For instance, the imagined soliloquy coalesces the persona in the speech ("I") with that of the student. In this way, the student understands how he holds the key to his fate. Accordingly, the instructions in vv.9-14 carry a powerful appeal and they encourage the student to weigh the transient pleasure against its terrible consequences. The student cannot help but ask: "Is it worth it to go after the seductress?" If wisdom is about prudence, then the wise person will weigh up the consequences of an action before acting.

While the first two parts of the lesson focus on the bad behaviour the student needs to avoid, the last focuses on the proper behaviour he should embrace. Thus vv.15-19 serve as the climax of the lesson.³² The teacher uses

³⁰ Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs*, 36.

³¹ Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 71.

³² There is no consensus on the meaning of vv.16-17. In this paper, the position of Chisholm is taken. He reads "springs" and "streams" as representing the sexual satisfaction provided by the wife. This reading is preferable, since it makes the entire water imagery of "cistern", "well", "springs" and "streams" represent one thing, that is the sexual satisfaction of the wife. This meaning also requires less change to the text.

a number of images such as water, cistern, spring, and fountain to persuade the student that right sexual behaviour takes place only within the context of marriage. In v.15 the teacher urges the student to “*drink water*” from his own “*cistern*” and “*well*”, a metaphor which refers to “satisfying one’s sexual desires by acts of lovemaking with one’s wife.”³³

The student is then encouraged to look to his wife because she is a fountain that produces continuous sexual satisfaction (vv.16-17).³⁴ The message in v.16 is unclear - it could be read as a question or a statement of consequence.³⁵ But as McKane cautions, whatever reading we take, there is the suggestion that “the dissemination of the springs outside in the streets is something to be avoided.”³⁶ For Chisholm, the “*springs*” (*ma’yān*) and “*streams*” (*palgē māyim*) of v.16 refer to the wife. They indicate the wife’s ability to provide endless sexual gratification. The words “*street*” (*hūṣ*) and “*city square*” (*rēhov*), Chisholm continues, are public places where promiscuous women prowl. In this sense, the teacher cautions the student that “the wife is capable of attracting and satisfying many men just like a prostitute or adulteress,” but as v.17 points out, “her streams of sexual satisfaction belong to the son.”³⁷

Further motivation for the student to seek sexual pleasure with the wife alone is given through the prayer offered for the wife (vv.18-19). Likening the wife to a fountain, the teacher seeks blessing for her. The act of blessing the wife covertly introduces God into the picture. God’s blessing signals his approval of the wife. Why should the student abandon what God approves (the wife) for what he disapproves (the seductress)? Also the teacher uses the animal imagery of a female deer (*’ayyālāh*) and female goat (*ya’ālāh*) to heighten the erotic language and to direct the student’s erotic desire to the wife (v.19). Thus he urges the student to be “wrapped up” (*šāgāh*)³⁸ in his wife’s affection, and he can do that continuously without any reservation.

The pedagogical technique in the third part of the lesson is straightforward. The teacher does not attempt to veil in any way his message to the student who needs to safely navigate his way in a world filled with the latent danger of the seductress. Several images permeate the instruction, but

McKane and Clifford think otherwise by taking “cistern” and “well” to represent the satisfaction of the woman, but “springs” and “streams” as representing the man’s sexual potency. See Chisholm, “Drink Water From Your Own Cistern,” 401-403, for an overview of the arguments.

³³ Perdue, *Proverbs*, 121.

³⁴ Chisholm, “Drink Water From Your Own Cistern,” 399.

³⁵ See Clifford, *Proverbs*, 71, and Murphy, *Proverbs*, 32 for an overview.

³⁶ McKane, *Proverbs*, 318.

³⁷ Chisholm, “Drink Water From Your Own Cistern,” 400.

³⁸ The Hebrew means “to err” or “go astray”. In its present context, the word suggests an infatuation or the process of losing one self in an act.

they make the message clearer rather than obscuring it. They appeal to the student's cognitive and emotional faculties that are needed to discern the comparisons between human behaviour and nature.

Conclusion

The conclusion presents the teacher with a final opportunity to teach the student right sexual behaviour. Thus he begins with an important rhetorical question; "*Why should you be infatuated, my son, with a stranger and embrace the bosom of a seductress*" (v.22)? The question is significant because we know that thinking is stimulated by questions. But the teacher deliberately uses a rhetorical question to emphasize the continuous danger posed by the seductress. The immediate instructions before the rhetorical question focused on the student and his wife. The language was strong on erotic sentiments and the teacher's aim was to direct the student's libido towards his wife. However, the teacher suddenly switches back to the seductress to remind the student of the danger and risk she poses even when one is in the safe hands of his wife.

It is important to note the third use of the address "my son" (v.20). Again the teacher strives to connect with his student at each stage of the teaching process. This develops a positive relationship between the teacher and the student, an important ingredient in the learning process.³⁹ A good relationship motivates the student to learn and to engage actively in the process.

Another significant pedagogical move in the conclusion is the overt introduction of God (v.21). God sees and knows every action under earth, the teacher explains. Thus if the student ever embraces the seductress, although others may not see his clandestine action, it will surely come to the notice of God. The appeal to God signifies a higher tone in the process of teaching. In the lessons, the motivations for right sexual behaviour were focused on principles that regulate fidelity on the basis of personal attraction. Now, the teacher appeals to higher principles that bring the student's conduct into relation with the duty he owes to God. However, the teacher does not make duty his only motivation. Indeed, he intentionally reserves the overt appeal to God to the conclusion in order to place emphasis on the personal and social reasons for right behaviour. Nonetheless, the two motivations stand hand in hand in persuading the student to restrict his sexual advances to his wife.

The last two verses (vv.22-23) end the lecture by pointing out the inner contradictions of sin. Sin has a "karmic" effect, that is, the sinner is destroyed by his own sins because they become a snare for him. Although the language

³⁹ Cf. Subhas Chandra Ghose, *Teacher Student Relationship And Its Impact on Student Unrest* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1989); Toni Noble and Helen McGrath, "Wellbeing and Resilience in Young People and the Role of Positive Relationships," in *Positive Relationships: Evidence Based Practice Across the World*, ed. by Sue Roffey (London/New York: Springer, 2012), 109-126.

in the conclusion appears generalized, thus prompting scholars like Plogér and McKane to suggest that vv.20-23 are not original, it should be understood within the immediate context.⁴⁰ God's moral administration is appealed to so the wicked cannot escape justice. Indirectly then, the teacher likens moral infidelity to wickedness. Just as the wicked sinner is ensnared by his own sins through the administration of God, so will the adulterer face a similar fate. Again, through the play on the word "wrapped" (*šāgāh*) we see the ingenuity of the teacher in closing his teaching. In v.19, the student is to get wrapped up with the love of the wife. In v.20 he is not to get wrapped up with the loose woman, for that will get him wrapped up in death (v.23).

An Evaluation of Pedagogical Strategies in Proverbs Five

Wisdom as depicted in Proverbs could generally refer to discipline and the formation of human character through virtue.⁴¹ The primary goal of Proverbs is to help students grasp this wisdom and to acquire the means to attain it. Accordingly, the process of teaching and learning is very explicit in the text. Prov. 5 demonstrates this pedagogical intent of the book on the subject of sexual morality. It reveals that the teaching and learning of sexual morality is a process that calls for skills on the part of the teacher and maturity on the part of the student. Prov. 5 aims at encouraging the student to avoid the seductive advances of the loose woman, or face destruction for foolishly disregarding words of wisdom. This aim explains the patient and thoughtful manner in which the teacher instructs the student. An evaluation of the pedagogical insight of the text can be done from two broad perspectives - the elements in the teaching and learning experience and the manner or process involved in teaching and learning.

Three elements in the teaching and learning experience emerge as central to the pedagogy of the text. The first is the teacher or instructor. He is basically the transmitter of knowledge: it is his wisdom the student is to heed. This portrait is at variance with current pedagogical principles, where teaching and learning is student/learner centred, giving students the opportunity to construct their own knowledge. However, there is more to this function of the teacher in the text than meets the eye. We need to understand that the teacher is ultimately trying to train the student in virtue.⁴² In Proverbs, the character of the teacher is not questioned: it is assumed that he epitomizes the values he teaches. Thus his personality is a model for the student. This explains why he employs the first person - "*listen to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding*" (v.1); "*listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth*" (v.7).

⁴⁰ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 72, refutes this suggestion of Plogér and McKane by citing the several connections between the conclusion and the rest of the text.

⁴¹ Perdue, *Proverbs*, 75-76.

⁴² Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom," 620.

The import for the pedagogical strategy of making the teacher the centre of knowledge stems from the challenges involved in teaching moral character. Although moral character is the greatest goal of education, it is difficult to teach. Moral character comes down to desiring what is right; but how can desires be taught?⁴³ Proverbs compensates for this difficulty through the student's faith in the figure and authority of the teacher. The student desires to become like the teacher.

The second element is the student. The text puts the student in a passive role because he is the addressee. We do not hear him speak or engage with the teacher. On this basis, it is difficult to assess the student's role in the learning process. Nonetheless, there are clues in the text that indicate an intricately complex engagement of the student in the learning process. For instance, the verbs in the exordium are directed at the student. He is supposed to first "*listen*", then "*incline the ear.*" In v.7 he is again told to "*listen*" to and "*not depart*" from the wisdom of the teacher. Thus, although the recipient of the instructions, the student is required to be an active agent in order to stay on the right path. In this sense, the wisdom of right sexual behaviour does not only lie in religious devotion, but rather through the student's ability and commitment to absorb the teacher's wisdom and his preparedness to apply what has been taught.

The third element in the teaching and learning experience is knowledge. Knowledge here refers to the content or the problem that is the focus of the instructional experience. The primary goal of the teacher is to dissuade the student from choosing the foolish path of listening to the loose woman's words. Accordingly his message is a means of addressing the menace posed by the strange woman and not as an end in itself. As a result, rather than taking the student through a journey full of abstractions, the teacher places his wisdom within the sphere of life. For Prov. 5, the threat posed by the strange woman is a real and concrete challenge that young men face in their lives. Therefore, the knowledge imparted to the students should produce understanding and equip them with the ability to solve this practical problem.

Equally important to the pedagogy of sexual morality is the manner or process involved in teaching and learning. The text places a premium on the need for attention and interest as primary and important ingredients for right pedagogy. The onus thus falls on teachers to first get the attention of their students, and then to ignite the students' interest in the teaching. Inversely, students need self-motivation in their quest for wisdom. This is especially true for learning values. To detach the students' will from the teaching of values will result in the mere assimilation of contents, but static cognition is not what Proverbs aims at. The word *šāma'* (listen) is not limited to mere cognition, but translates knowledge into action. Fox explains that wisdom is not simply

⁴³ Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom," 620.

knowing “what is good to do ... but also wanting to do what is right to avoid sin.”⁴⁴

In this respect, the teacher employs different motivations (v.2; vv.15-20) to dissuade the student from following the loose woman. He also employs the strategy of warnings (vv.3-6 and vv.9-11). He further uses imperatives (v.8) to spell out clearly what the student is required to do and what he is required to abstain from. Thus the binary rhetoric of sexual behaviour leaves the student with only two choices, either to commit sin with the seductress and face the repercussions, or to stick to his wife in order to please God.

Conclusion

The goal of Proverbs is to help the student discern the way of wisdom amidst the bewildering array of choices and desires presented in daily life. Prov. 5, together with the other lectures, specifically touches on the subject of sexual morality. The main concern of the teacher for the student is the danger posed by the seductress. Knowing the struggles young men go through in controlling their libido, the teacher employs several pedagogical skills to dissuade the student from heeding the advances of the seductress. For instance, the teacher places a premium on the principles of attention and interest, which are important ingredients for the learning process. He also draws closer to the student to establish a good relationship between the instructor and the learner. The lesson is plain and unambiguous, indicating clearly the dos and don'ts for the student. The student needs to take on an active role in applying the knowledge. He is required to make concrete decisions based on what has been taught. These and several other pedagogical insights lie within Prov. 5. In this respect, even though not all of its teaching and learning strategies will be followed in modern classrooms, Prov. 5 still has much wisdom to share with modern teachers and students on the subject of sexual morality.

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⁴⁴ Fox, “The Pedagogy of Proverbs 2,” 243.

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Preaching Biblically in the Nigerian Prosperity Gospel Context

by Joel Kamsen Tihitshak Biwul

Abstract

The one who lays claim to the pulpit ministry has no other business but that of preaching the Word of God. This article argues that biblical preaching is fast disappearing from the Nigerian pulpit because of wrong motivation. It also argues that this situation has adverse effects on Christians' spirituality and the Christian witness. It concludes that preachers of a different gospel in Nigeria must make the Scripture central and be willing to submit themselves to adequate and proper training in hermeneutical principles and homiletical rudiments for effective biblical preaching.

Introduction

In a strong imperative mood, Paul commanded Timothy to “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim 4:2 NIV). In the same tone, he instructed him, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15 NIV). These biblical texts indicate that Christian preaching should be biblical both in its content and expression. As Homer Kent demonstrated some time ago, the Church needs Scriptural preaching.¹ The early Church gave attention to biblical preaching – preaching Christ as Saviour and Lord, and about his kingdom.² As a consequence, many came to faith in Christ, because “by preaching the Word they turned on the light so that their hearers could see themselves as God saw them.”³ Also, the

¹ Homer A. Kent, Jr., “The Centrality of the Scriptures as Reflected in Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy,” *JETS* (Vol. 14.3, 1971): 157-164. Kent posits that the preacher should be a specialist in the Word of God, but then notes that Scriptural preaching is being relegated to the background in favour of other secondary elements (157). He asserts that the church through its ministry should solve its problems through a thorough application of the Word of God in every case (158). Timothy Palmer adds, “The task of biblical preaching and exegesis is to allow God to speak through his Word to people in our time and culture. If biblical preaching does not happen, then God’s people will not hear the word of God proclaimed from an individual text.” See Timothy P. Palmer, “Dividing the Word Correctly: An Evaluation of Exegetical Models,” accessed January 7, 2011, http://www.tcnr.org/index_files/rb50.palmer-exegesis.html.

² Leon Morris’ masterpiece on the theological pillars of the salvific ministry of Jesus Christ whom the disciples and early Church preached is quite useful here. See Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

³ Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 21.

Church Fathers devoted much attention to doctrinal and theological issues and arrived at biblically based conclusions. As a result, they have bequeathed to subsequent generations of Christians credible church history and Christian doctrine and theology.

Nigeria boasts of many local churches, one on almost every minor street, and many Christian preachers.⁴ One only needs to turn on the television to pick and choose which preacher to listen to. In a sense, this is a good development for the Nigerian church given the challenge of other opposing faiths. Every true Christian minister is called to proclaim the Word of God, because "it is the Word of God in its entirety, understood by the most diligent of scholarly study, and empowered by the Spirit of God, which holds the final solution for man and his needs."⁵ However, does the Church in contemporary Nigeria, with all the plethora of new local churches and myriads of preachers in her, give the Bible its deserved priority as the centre of her preaching? Is the emerging current trend of indiscriminate Christian preaching not suggesting that the Bible may be losing out as the centre of attraction to enthrone the preacher himself? If the centrality of the Bible is not preserved, the church risks losing the force, flavour, and transformational power of the gospel that Christianity proclaims.⁶ If the content of the Bible and the gospel message of the cross are distorted, then the church risks preaching a heretical and non-functional Christian spirituality.

This paper's aim is to advance some reasons why the Scriptures, Jesus, and the cross are gradually losing out as the centre of preaching among some contemporary Nigerian preachers. Because of these changes, Christian preaching is losing its evangelistic grip, and is failing to deepen Christian spirituality to the levels exemplified by the early church, or during the Reformation and Reawakening periods. It also considers the effects of such lapses on Christian spirituality and Christian witness in contemporary Nigeria.

Understanding the Concept of Biblical Preaching

To preach God's Word is to risk both misrepresentation of the Word and being misunderstood by the world. First of all, the preacher of God's Word needs to understand the concept of *biblical preaching* and its importance to

⁴ See Olu Ojedokun, "The Challenge of Biblical Expository Preaching Amongst Nigerian Pentecostals," Friday, August 31, 2007, Accessed Wednesday January 05, 2011 from <http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2007/aug/313.html>.

⁵ Kent, "The Centrality of the Scripture," *JETS*, 164.

⁶ Ian M. Randall notes that evangelicalism is essentially a distinctive stream of Christian spirituality with a 'lived experience' in personal relationship to Christ. He concludes that evangelical missional spirituality is transformational as the Scriptures and the cross form part of its central focus. Ian M. Randall, "A Missional Spirituality: Moravian Brethren and Eighteenth-Century English Evangelicalism," *Transformation* 23/4 (October, 2006): 204-213.

global evangelisation and Christian spirituality. What separates Christian preaching from other forms of religious preaching is the centrality of the Bible⁷ and its preachers as heralds and ambassadors.⁸ The Bible remains the core of Christian preaching not only because it is the Word of God, but also because it is the only source of spiritual transformation. The Bible is therefore the warrant for Christian preaching. As Haddon Robinson rightly states, “God speaks through the Bible. It is the major tool of communication by which He addresses individuals today” (2 Tim 2:15-17).⁹ Therefore, to preach, in Christian understanding, is to lay claim to an authority that is God’s revealed and spoken words written in human words and preserved as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word in its earliest documentation.

What then is the import of *biblical preaching*, since we are here making a case for the necessity of biblically based Christian preaching in contemporary time? Although scholarly opinion is at variance, the majority opinion understands the concept as expository preaching. Vines and Shaddix define *preaching* within Christian circles as “the oral communication of biblical truth by the Holy Spirit through a human personality to a given audience with the intent of enabling a positive response.”¹⁰ What makes Christian preaching *biblical preaching* is the presence of a biblical truth, propelled by the illuminating role of the Holy Spirit, and channelled through a prepared human instrument who serves as its carrier. The Bible is the meeting point in Christian preaching. When Christian preaching is biblically centred, there is always “a living interaction involving God, the preacher, and the congregation.”¹¹

Biblical preaching is engaging the biblical text in an exegetical and hermeneutical manner to arrive at relevant contextual application. In the drama that played out between the risen Christ and some of his disturbed, disenfranchised and confused disciples as they walked to Emmaus from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13-27, 44-48), Jesus taught them from the whole

⁷ John Piper says, “True preaching is not the opinions of a mere man. It is the faithful exposition of God’s Word.” See John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 9, 10, 11.

⁸ John R. W. Stott and Greg Scharf, *The Challenge of Preaching* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Preaching Resources, 2011), 3.

⁹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Expository Preaching: Principles and Practice* (2d ed.; 2001; repr., Leicester: IVP, 2004), 20.

¹⁰ Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 27. The role of the Holy Spirit in Christian preaching is highly consequential. Vines and Shaddix explain, “He inspired the Word we preach. He illuminates our understanding as to its meaning. He anoints our communication of it. He enlightens the minds of listeners. He convicts their hearts and prompts them to respond. Preaching is the Holy Spirit’s event. If He is left out, preaching does not happen.” See p. 25. Also, see J. Daniel Baumann, *An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 277-91 on the Holy Spirit in Christian preaching.

¹¹ Robinson, *Expository Preaching*, 21.

Scriptures (the Jewish Scriptures) beginning with Moses, then the prophets, and lastly, the Psalms. Jesus' model of preaching here underscores the fact that Christian preaching must, of necessity, be biblically based; for it is the content of the Scriptures rightly exposed that brings about conviction and transformation of lives (see also Acts 2:11-41; 6:8-7:53). This is made effectual when the biblical text is appropriately applied to the context of the listener as in Jesus' case.¹²

The State of Preaching in Contemporary Nigeria

It is said that the force of Christianity, and indeed the changing centre of gravity of the Christian gospel, is moving to the global South from the North.¹³ This shift in the "Christian centre of gravity" can be explained by the fact that "Africa is one of the continents where Christianity has experienced rapid growth."¹⁴ While the continent of Africa is a major player in this paradigm shift, Nigeria is also among the key participants in that Nigeria has many churches, preachers, and professing Christians. She is a nation full of religious zeal such that being religious is synonymous to being a Nigerian. This country is particularly unique by the measure of her black population, by the socio-political and ethno-religious tolerance of her citizens, even by the enduring economic elasticity of the people.¹⁵ Her embedded positive characteristics have possibly earned her recognition in this global shift.

The irony however, is that despite her large and colourful presence in the religious arena, the quality of her Christian spirituality is low. It is quite a paradox that "Nigeria, one of the most religious countries in the world, is also

¹² In Christian preaching, the preacher must ask if the sermon "says what the Bible wanted to say" and whether the points raised in a particular sermon are "what the author intended to convey and what the original audience understood" them to mean. Ferguson explains that the goal of exegetical preaching is to expound the meaning and significance of Scriptures. Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Exegesis," in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art*, ed., Samuel T. Logan, Jr. (Philipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1986), 192-3.

¹³ See Andrew Finlay Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (2002; Fourth printing, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2007), 118.

¹⁴ Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "Women and Evangelization: A Challenge to the Church in the Third Millennium," in *Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections for the 21st Century*, eds., Nahashon W. Ndungu and Philomena Njeri Mwaura (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), 119.

¹⁵ The majority of Nigerian peoples have suffered political and economic oppression and enslavement under their bad and evil leaders who consciously collaborate with a few of her wicked and evil powerful citizens to enslave their fellow citizens because of greed, even though they sing, ". . . The labour of our heroes past shall never be in vain." Yet, the brutalised majority are always and ever happy people, because they hold to the simplistic ideology of ordinary life which believes that, "No wahala, God dey;" and "One day, e go better;" meaning, "not to worry, God exists;" therefore, the ugly situation will change one day for better.

voted one of the most corrupt, crises-prone nations on earth.”¹⁶ The quality of her spirituality does not match the quantity of her Christianity. The influence and impact of Christian presence in her society is minimal vis-à-vis the plethora and paraphernalia of her religiosity. One identifiable factor that could be said to be the culprit responsible for this situation is poor and substandard preaching of the Bible among most Christian congregations.¹⁷ Palmer rightly asserts: “we have a similar problem in Nigeria. Sermons here too are often based superficially or vaguely on the Bible. The exposition of the text is not regularly heard. Sound exegesis is not regularly done.”¹⁸ So, when Christians are fed with spiritual chaff by men and women who claim to know the Bible, yet live a contradictory lifestyle and preach a different gospel as Adeleye noted,¹⁹ its effects are at best endemic on the Christian community and at worse contagious to the Nigerian society. This situation has certain causative agents that should be understood.

Prosperity Preaching is Motivated by Personal Experience

The concept of “ministry” in contemporary Nigeria, particularly the pastoral and preaching ministry, for the most part has lost its meaning. Most of the founders and presidents of some new generation churches or ministries in Nigeria do not seem to have the right motivation for ministry. Such people are only looking for popularity or economic benefits, though they will not admit the fact. Even some young people joining the pastoral ministry in the orthodox missionary churches are not sure what the ministry entails. When it comes to preaching the Word, such preachers use the “cut and paste” approach. “The Lord/God said to me” is a regular phrase used by such Nigerian preachers whenever they are preaching. Although this characteristic is found within the Pentecostal-Charismatic circle, preachers from other circles are gradually being infected. They either enter the pulpit and preach without reading from the Bible or they read a passage, but close the Bible soon afterwards and go on to tell some experiential stories. This presupposes the preacher’s personal experience as authority in place of the Bible. Since the Bible that should be preached with every conviction and every sense of seriousness is dethroned, this type of preaching focuses on the preacher, who often claims a certain measure of spiritual superiority and authority over the listeners.²⁰

¹⁶ Folarin Samson, “Of Perverted Religion and Nigeria’s Problems,” in *This Day* Vol. 16, No. 6153 (Monday, February 27, 2012), 19.

¹⁷ See the descriptive paradigm shift in Femi Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel* (Nairobi: WordAlive/Bukuru: ACTS/Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), xi-xii.

¹⁸ Palmer, “Dividing the Word Correctly,” accessed January 7, 2011.

¹⁹ Adeleye describes such preachers of a different gospel as “prosperity merchants” and preachers of the “gospel according to the stomach,” who, he says, “. . . get richer and fatter while the flock is kept happy with new slogans and gimmicks.” Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel*, 42-43.

²⁰ These preachers claim superiority and authority because they consider themselves as “Men of God” (MOG) or “Women of God” (WOG), “Papa” or “Mama,” and “Senior

Preaching based on personal experience is not only self-centred and weak but it runs the risk of dethroning God and preparing fertile soil for glaring heresy. This type of preaching sidelines Christ and his cross, the very centre of Christian preaching, to deify the human self. Bryan Chapell submits that truly Christian preaching is distinctive because of the all-pervading presence of a saving and sanctifying Christ. Jesus Christ must be at the heart of every sermon preached; failing to mention him warps the biblical message.²¹ Any preaching that dethrones God sidelines Christ, robs the Holy Spirit, and empties the cross of its power. It becomes devoid of divine authority and the power to convict and transform souls. Such preaching momentarily satisfies the emotional and sociological needs of the listeners but robs them of spiritual blessings. It preaches everything else but the Word of God. Preachers who “fail to preach the Scriptures . . . abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God. That is why most modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn.”²² It is the spiritual experience that is gained from a direct encounter with God in his Word that is the antidote to a sinful attitude, sinful behaviour, and sinful lifestyle. As Robinson asserts, “Through the preaching of the Scriptures, God encounters men and women to bring them to salvation and to richness and ripeness of Christian character.”²³ When the backbone of preaching is dethroned, committed Christians as well as non-Christians are literally robbed of the benefits from an “explicitly Christ-centred preaching today.”²⁴

Prosperity Preaching is Motivated by the Philosophy of Blessings

An emerging trend in the contemporary Nigerian pulpit is an emphasis on financial and material blessings and a de-emphasis on spirituality. Truly, every human being wants to enjoy comfort and the good life. No one wants to suffer because suffering is sociologically, psychologically, emotionally, and physically traumatic. Suffering can only be endured when it becomes unavoidable. Much of the preaching in Nigeria, particularly in Pentecostal-Charismatic circles, is both premeditated and predicated on the ideology of blessings in pursuance of the good life. If you were to find your way into a Nigerian Christian congregation worshipping on a Sunday, for instance, one of the songs you would frequently hear the worshippers sing is,

“Eh-eh-eh-eh, my Lord is good O;
Everything na double, double.”

Apostle” or “Bishop.” In this context, no member dares to contest whatever any of these persons says or does because they are dreadful and authoritative tyrant lords.

²¹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (2d ed. 2005; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 274, 277.

²² Robinson, *Expository Preaching*, 20.

²³ Robinson, *Expository Preaching*, 20.

²⁴ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 14.

Such a song is motivated by the quest for double personal blessings from the good Lord. Worshipers are taught to imbibe the power of positive confession and to claim what they desire, as negative confession deprives them of the double blessings that are theirs from the good Lord. As such, everyone wants, for example, the blessing of a good car, of befitting personal shelter, of admission into good schools, of good employment in a well-paid job, of either a good wife or husband, of a spectacular promotion, and of huge contracts for business contractors. Herein lies the ideology of the prosperity gospel, described as a gospel of champagne versus a gospel of the cross.²⁵

As a result of such preaching, the listeners believe that failure in life is not their portion; that nothing bad or evil will ever befall them; and that whatever they claim by faith, they will always have. The implications of this ideology are that the preacher will manipulate the Scriptures to maintain his or her status. Also, since such preachers claim a “child of God” can never be the tail but always the head,²⁶ their listeners are not prepared to listen to any sermon that discounts material blessings. Yet church members run the risk of a backslidden life when the realities of life dawn on them and these material blessing don't appear. This “gospel” is grounded in falsehood and self-aggrandisement. The third Lausanne Congress asserts, “We cannot build the kingdom of the God of truth on foundations of dishonesty. Yet in our craving for ‘success’ and ‘results’ we are tempted to sacrifice our integrity, with distorted or exaggerated claims that amount to lies.”²⁷

Prosperity Preaching is Motivated by a Hunger for Miracles

One of the statements that Jesus made to his disciples before his ascension was that they would do many things that he himself had not done (John 14:11-14; Matt 21:18-22). His earthly ministry was also characterised by miracles as he mentioned in his response to John the Baptist's emissaries (Luke 7:22; Matt 4:23-25). The gospel accounts are replete with Jesus' miracles: Jesus raised the dead (Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 7:11-16; 8:41-56; John 11:38-44; Luke 7:1-10), healed the sick (Matt 8:14-16; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 14:38-41), restored sight to the blind (Matt 9:27-30; John 9:1-34), made the lame to walk (Matt 9:1-8; Mk 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26), set free the demon-possessed (Matt 8:28-34; 9:32-33), fed thousands with a few loaves of bread and some fish (Matt 14:13-21; 15:32-38; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13; see also. John 6:25-26), stilled the storm and caused Peter to

²⁵ See Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel*, 15-28.

²⁶ One among the major texts for prosperity preachers is Deut 28 where Moses told the community of Israel they would be the head and not the tail when they possessed the Promised Land. See article on prosperity gospel by George O. Folarin, “The Prosperity Gospel in Nigeria: A Re-Examination of the Concept, Its Impact, and an Evaluation,” *Cyber Journal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* (Accessed January 7, 2011 from <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj16/folarin.html>).

²⁷ Julia Cameron, ed., *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Peabody, Massachusetts: The Lausanne Movement, 2011), 63.

walk on the water as he himself did (Matt 8:23-27; 14:22-33; Mark 4:36-41; 6:47-51; Luke 8:22-25; John 6:16-21), and many more. Much preaching in contemporary Nigeria is largely anchored on the ideology of miracles, because these are prominent in Jesus' statements and actions.

Also, in a society where the idea of "cheap," "free," and "have it quick" is a dominant factor in people's drive for the things that life demands, consulting mediums and false prophets for miracles becomes commonplace. When people seek cheap popularity and cheap blessings under the guise of prosperity on their way to greatness, they may go to any length to achieve their ends. Worse still, the atmosphere for seeking miracles will be charged especially when some church members electrify others with their testimonies about God's miracles in their lives, whether such claims are factual or fictitious. Adeleye understands this as strange times with a strange gospel:

These are times in which it is becoming more difficult to differentiate between faith and fantasy, and between devotion to Christ and religious delusion. We live in times when the line between churches and cults is thin and people easily mistake spiritism for spirituality. These are strange times indeed. Times when people wholeheartedly follow strange teachings and philosophies even within the church; times of strong addiction to seducing spirits; and times when leaders feed their flock with false doctrines. As regards the content and practice of the gospel, only those with discernment, who understand the times and refuse to compromise their vision, know the difference between the true and the counterfeit gospel.²⁸

All this is traceable to the preaching and teaching that worshippers receive most Sundays. When miracles and not sound biblical exposition become the centre of attraction, the Lordship of Christ will diminish; personal commitment to God and total devotion to his service will be eroded in the minds of truth-seeking saints; and miracles will then become the central message of the gospel and the Christian faith. *The Cape Town Commitment* affirms:

. . . we deny that God's miraculous power can be treated as automatic, or at the disposal of human techniques, or manipulated by human words, actions, gifts, objects, or rituals . . . But we believe that the teachings of many who vigorously promote the prosperity gospel seriously distort the Bible; that their practices and lifestyle are often unethical and un-Christ-like; that they commonly replace genuine evangelism with miracle-seeking, and replace the call to repentance with the call to give money to the preacher's organization. . . . We therefore reject the excesses of prosperity teaching as incompatible with balanced biblical Christianity.²⁹

²⁸ Adeleye, *Preachers of a Different Gospel*, 5-6.

²⁹ Julia Cameron, ed., *The Cape Town Commitment*, 64-65.

Prosperity Preaching is Centred on the African Worldview of Demonism

The hermeneutical understanding of the Pauline imperatives in Eph 6:10-18 (see also Acts 16:16-17; Eph 1:20-21) indicates a case of engaging in power encounter by Christians. The context of Nigerian Christians makes demonology a characteristic element in preaching, taking the form of “deliverance” or “power encounter.” Coming from a worldview that perceives the world as permeated by evil spirits who live in forests, graveyards, caves, body of waters, and so on, the Christian life in Africa generally is characterised by fear of these evil spirits. In order to dispel such fear in the hearts of members, elements of spiritual warfare always find their way into African Christian preaching. The description of some preachers as “liquid anointed,” “fire brand,” “demon bulldozer,” and so on, is characteristic of this fact. Statements like “I bind you,” “I command you,” “I cast you into the abyss,” “holy ghost fire,” and the audience responding with a chorus of “amen!” to the preacher’s, “In Jesus’ name,” are also characteristics of such a worldview.

It is quite proper to preach and teach on biblical demonology among the Christian community. Denying the presence and power of demons is tantamount to denying the presence of evil and the reality of the Christ event itself. What is at issue however is the shift in focus from the source of the supreme authority to deal with demonic powers to the object of confrontation itself. The effect of such undue attention makes demons dreaded and venerated by the same people who lay claim to God’s ultimate power. The quest to acquire power in order to maintain the status quo has literally pushed some professing Christians and some preachers into the practice of spiritism and even a type of Christian witchcraft.

The Effects of Nigerian Prosperity Preaching

Clearly, Christianity in Nigeria is becoming afflicted by the prosperity gospel which threatens the integrity of biblical Christianity. The failure of preaching in contemporary Nigeria to make the content and message of the Bible, and Christ and the cross the nerve centre of Christian preaching, no doubt has some attendant effects on the Christian community’s lifestyle and the Christian witness in society at large. This failure leads, amongst other implications, to shallow Christian spirituality and low moral ethics. These serve as breeding grounds for spiritism, negative ethnicity and tribalism to flourish.

Shallow Christian Spirituality

Jesus did not mince words when he used the salt and light metaphors to teach his disciples their crucial role in society (Matt 5:13-16). Jesus’ basic intention here was that his disciples would replicate his lifestyle and message to the world after he returned to the Father (see John 13:34-35). Similarly, in giving instructions to Timothy on the ground of pastoral theology and ethics, Paul said, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17 ESV). True

Christian competence and full equipping in the Scriptures for quality spirituality and service can be attained only when biblical principles are consciously, vigorously and carefully applied to life (see Ps 119:10-11, 105).

Christian maturity and spirituality are attained through personal discipline in the Word and dogged determination to put into practice what the Word says. John Wesley decried the low level of Christian spirituality in his time when he stressed that the biggest problem is getting Christianity into life. Iain Duguid echoes this concern when he says, "Christians know a great deal about how they ought to live. Their problem is that they don't live up to what they know. The gap is not in their knowledge but in their obedience."³⁰ Olu Ojedokun wonders "why with the emergence of many 'born again' Christians in government their impact is not being felt in addressing issues in Nigeria, such as, bad governance, bribery, corruption and greed," nepotism, favouritism and negative godfatherism, and the like. He wonders if the lack of grounding in proper expository teaching is the reason why there has been little impact by Christianity on Nigerian society.³¹ The answer is obvious. To hold only to the form of Christianity by professing the Christian faith without practicing it makes the message of the Christian gospel ineffectual. The world needs more confessing Christians than professing ones as the latter only hold to religious formalism while the former practice the tenets of Christianity (see 2 Tim 3:1-5).

The difficulty of getting Christianity into life is simply a failure of conviction and self-discipline to live by the dictates and precepts of the Scriptures. It is this obvious lacuna among the Christian community in contemporary Nigeria that accounts for shallow Christian spirituality. When the Bible, though considered to be the final authority in matters of the Christian faith and life, and the only guide book for life, is not made the core of Christian preaching; if its content is not properly expounded by a trained and qualified expositor, by a committed and Spirit-filled preacher; and if its message is not adequately related to the modern context, substandard Christianity and spirituality will inevitably be the result. The knowledge of the Bible should not only stay in the head; it must stir the heart to transform life and society.

A Low Standard of Biblical Ethics

Biblical preaching must hang on the precepts of ethical codes prescribed by the Scriptures. When biblical principles are shoved aside in preaching, a low understanding and application of the principles of Christian ethics will certainly characterize the Christian lifestyle. While ethics is generally understood as "the process of determining right and wrong," Christian ethics or biblical ethics is perceived as revolving "around God's specially revealed

³⁰ Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 34.

³¹ Olu Ojedokun, "The Challenge of Biblical Expository Preaching Amongst Nigerian Pentecostal," Friday August 31, 2007. Accessed on January 5, 2011 from <http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2007/aug/313.html>.

commands.”³² J.J. Davis asserts that in biblical ethics, “The teachings of Scripture are the final court of appeal for ethics. . . . The Bible functions normatively in evangelical ethics through its specific commands and precepts, general principles, various precedents, and overall world view.”³³ The Scripture not only “constitutes the ‘bottom line’ of the decision making process” and “must cast the deciding vote,” but crucially, the “canonical Scriptures are the very Word of God, the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice, and consequently are the highest authority for both doctrine and morals.”³⁴

In contemporary Nigerian Christian experience, it seems the world has entered the Church instead of the Church entering the world to infect it with the message of the gospel of righteousness. Her contemporary Christianity is fast conforming to the patterns of worldly values rather than transforming the world with biblical values (Rom 12:1-3). It appears that the Christian understanding of right and wrong and the sense of moral judgement in Nigeria is being blurred by the standards of morality set by humanistic ideologies and the monster of corruption and the quest for materialistic gain. It is no longer the Scriptures but society that is the final arbiter in matters of morality. Something has gone wrong with the ethics of the twenty-first century Nigerian Church. This laxity in Christian morality of thought, words and actions stems from the poor exposition of the Scriptures and lack of a radically Christian lifestyle. Knowingly or unknowingly, preachers fail to teach their listeners basic ethical, biblical and theological principles from a divine perspective. But doing this would help form the basis for their moral judgements, decisions, actions, and choices as they relate to society. Stott states that as models of Christian spirituality and morality, as those who should lead by integrity and sincerity, “preachers must mean what they say in the pulpit, and must practice what they preach when out of it.”³⁵

Negative Ethnicity and/or Tribalism

The practice of ethnicity and tribalism in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, is still commonplace in the 21st century. Turaki says, “Ethnicity and tribalism are currently the most pervasive and powerful destructive forces in Africa.”³⁶ While Barje Maigadi concedes that, “Ethnic diversity is a gift from God” to the human race, he observes that “the negative influence of ethnicity” not only stays at the global political scene, but is sadly infiltrating the Church which is “now

³² Scott B. Rae, *Moral Choices: An Introduction To Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 15, 19.

³³ John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today* (2d ed.; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1993), 3.

³⁴ Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 3.

³⁵ Stott and Greg Scharf, *The Challenge of Preaching*, 69.

³⁶ Yusufu Turaki, *Tribal Gods of Africa: Ethnicity, Racism, Tribalism and the Gospel of Christ* (Nairobi: Ethics, Peace and Justice Commission of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, 1997), 3.

increasingly becoming ethnically divided.”³⁷ Ethnic and tribal ties are very strong in Africa. To be African is to belong to a tribe or ethnic group, and without that link a person’s identity is lost. This ideology is so strong that, in Nigeria for instance, the concept of tribal identity is fast becoming an issue that is taking on both political and religious implications.

This natural sociological identity did not change or die when people from different tribes and kindred came to faith in Jesus Christ. African Christians still maintain their tribal roots and ethno-cultural heritage wherever they find themselves just as a citizen of a country maintains his citizenship wherever he goes. To extricate oneself from such social identity on the part of the Christian is quite an uphill task as one’s feeling of ethnic and tribal lineage would always naturally pop-up automatically because it is embedded in the subconscious mind. African Christians still cling to their tribal roots and ethno-cultural heritage because it is part of their identity, answering the question, “Who am I?”. The issue is that of belonging to a whole group to give an individual essence. As John Mbiti rightly submits, “a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man” is located in the concept of “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.”³⁸ This anthropological and sociological ideology is synonymous to the Africanness of the Africans. Mbiti states further,

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately He is simply part of the whole . . . for the individual depends on the corporate group Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.³⁹

Christianity in Africa will have to fight harder through the preaching of the gospel to overcome this sociological attachment because African Christian converts were not severed from their ethno-tribal ties when they came to faith. A Christian convert still maintains his/her tribal identity, but that identity must be subjected to the Lordship of Christ and must not be promoted over the new identity. Christians are to demote their loyalty to tribal lineage and enhance their allegiance to Christ as members of a new community. The consciousness of the individual as an integral part of the ethnic group and the strong sense of identity derived from being a member of a specific ethnic group must be taken seriously and given their proper place in the minds of believers.

Biblical preaching about the believer’s ultimate loyalty to God and his kingdom will help African Christians place their ethnic consciousness and identity under God’s transforming grace. When people see themselves as Christians first, with their highest allegiance reserved for God alone, then they

³⁷ Barje Sulmane Maigadi, *Divisive Ethnicity in the Church in Africa* (Kaduna, Nigeria: Baraka Press, 2006), xv.

³⁸ John Samuel Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (2d ed.; 1990; repr., London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 2008), 106.

³⁹ Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 106.

have the perspective to see that God loves all people, and that they can do so as well, whether they are Igbo or Yoruba, Kikuyu or Luo, Swazi or Zulu. They become Christians first and Zulus second. This places tribal identity in its proper place without breaking the best aspects of the bonds that unite an ethnic group. Only when Africans of all ethnic groups love God with their entire beings can they learn how to love their neighbours as themselves. This perspective can only be perceived when these issues are addressed biblically from the pulpit.⁴⁰

Conclusion

This article has made a case for the necessity for biblical preaching in Nigeria. The discussion has revealed that sinful pre-occupation with prosperity theology is among the factors that account for the lack of biblically centred Christian preaching in Nigeria. It was argued that this homiletical dislocation takes a great toll on Christian spirituality and the Christian witness in the Nigerian society with such results as a low standard of morality and negative ethnicity. In order to reverse this ugly trend, the need to raise the level of biblical literacy of Nigerian Christians is quite apparent and urgent. This is achievable when untrained and half-trained preachers submit themselves to adequate training by credible theological seminaries and strong Departments of Religious Studies in Nigerian universities in the area of Christian theology, biblical hermeneutics, biblical ethics, and effective homiletical principles.

Within orthodox Christian circles, the biblical text is inevitably the centre for preaching; the centrality of the cross is the focus of preaching; spiritual transformation is the goal of preaching; and eternity with Christ is the end of preaching. "Reformation in the pulpit will come about only as God-called men [and women] return to the basics of the preaching event"⁴¹ and when their listeners are willing to adopt the Berean approach to the sermons they listen to and to the study of the Bible itself (see Acts 17:11-12).

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⁴⁰ See Turaki, *Tribal Gods of Africa*, 146, who insists that this task of teaching about ethnicity, racism and tribalism is the job of the Church.

⁴¹ Vines and Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit*, 16.

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Reconciliation between the BCSA and the BUSA from a Biblical Perspective

by Luvuyo Ntombana

Abstract

This article is based on ethnographic work conducted between the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA) and the Baptist Convention Southern Africa (BCSA) in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. The two Baptist churches share the same historical background and presuppositions concerning the Bible. They were once affiliated with each other in the context of apartheid policies and regulations. BCSA was for Black people, while the BUSA was for White people. During the merger discussions of the 1980s the two bodies separated and some black members of the BCSA joined the BUSA while some opted to remain with the BCSA and ended affiliation with the BUSA. This process caused huge bitterness between the two organisations especially among the Black members. After the inauguration of the democratically elected government in 1994, the new government introduced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was to facilitate reconciliation in a hurt and divided society. The BUSA and BCSA also embarked on the road to reconciliation and unity. A variety of reconciliation meetings and fellowships took place between the two organisations. It appears that from point of view of the national leadership of the two organisations reconciliation has been achieved but ethnographic work suggests that some members of the two churches in the Eastern Cape are still at loggerheads and still have not forgiven and reconciled with each other. This article identifies the concept of reconciliation as one of the major theological themes fundamental to the Christian faith. In particular I look at how Paul illustrates this concept, especially in the book of 2 Corinthians. As a result, the two churches, especially in the Eastern Cape, are persuaded to reconsider their faith and the meaning of reconciliation as seen by the New Testament.

Introduction

When I proposed writing a book on reconciliation, most institutions rejected my manuscript, arguing that reconciliation is one of the concepts Christians do not want to hear or talk about. They explained that Christians would rather read about God's blessings, prosperity, evangelism, church growth, etc, than issues that expose their brokenness, such as the need for reconciliation. I have engaged with the topic of Biblical reconciliation because I regard it as being at the core of Christian faith and Christian existence.¹ Reconciliation is the concept that truly defines Christian relationship with God and other human beings. The Baptist Convention of Southern Africa (BCSA)

¹ H. Russel Botman, *To Remember and to Heal: Theological and Psychological Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation*. (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1996), 7.

and the Baptist Union of Southern Africa (BUSA)² were once affiliated with each other and are still individually affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance which is one of the International bodies where Baptists in the world fellowship together. These two Baptist churches are known and refer to themselves as the 'people of the book', implying that their doctrine is extracted from the Bible and that they live by its teachings. They also share the same presuppositions concerning the Bible and they are part of the broader Christian group called Evangelicals.³ The kind of affiliation they once had reflected the terms and conditions of the apartheid government and its policies where non-White people were not equal with White people.⁴

The BUSA was for White people and considered a 'mother' body and the BCSA, which was for Black people, depended on the BUSA for financial resources and pastoral salaries.⁵ After the unsuccessful merger discussions of the 1980's there was a change in the two churches. Some black members and ministers of the BCSA joined the BUSA, and those who remained with the BCSA opted to be independent of the BUSA and cut all affiliation with the BUSA.⁶ This process caused major pain and resulted in a legacy of bitterness, especially at the local church level and among black people. For example in one of the churches in the Eastern Cape (Njwaxa Baptist Church) the church was divided into two groups during the same service. BCSA members sat on one side and BUSA members sat on the other, and none wanted to give up the building.⁷ During my ethnographic study I found that some pastors in the Eastern Cape (EC) had not spoken to or even greeted each other since the

² From this point on, reference is made to the churches by their acronyms, BUSA and BCSA. In some cases, reference is made to the churches simply as 'Union and 'Convention' as these terms are known more commonly by their congregants.

³ Baptists as Evangelicals are a Protestant group that emphasizes the belief that every person must accept Jesus as Lord and as personal Saviour. The only way to escape from sin is to repent and receive Jesus. Their emphasis is on repentance from sin and they have been known for using tent campaigns. One of the well-known Evangelical preachers is Billy Graham in the USA.

⁴ Luvuyo Ntombana and Adam Perry, "Exploring the Critical Moments When the Baptist Denomination Divided: Does Revisiting These Moments Give Hope to Reconciliation Between the 'Union' and 'Convention?'" *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 68 (March 2012): 3.; Terry Rae, *Baptist History in South Africa*. Paper presented at the Baptist World Alliance in Seoul, Korea (July 2004): 1.

⁵ Peter Mhlophe, "The Effects of Apartheid on Baptist Convention Pastors in South Africa", in Des Hoffmeister and Brian J. Gurney, eds., *The Barkley West National Awareness Workshop: An Empowered Future*, (Johannesburg: Awareness Campaign Committee of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, 1990), 55.

⁶ Luvuyo Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process Between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union of South Africa." (MTh Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 2007), 56.

⁷ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .", 114.

conflict arising out of the unsuccessful merger talks of the 1980's.⁸ Members who joined the BUSA considered the BCSA members who chose to be independent of the BUSA too ambitious and making a politically motivated decision, while those who remained with the BCSA considered the others as traitors who sided with White people.

In the 1990's when a democratically elected government took over in South Africa, a reconciliation opportunity was given, facilitated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The national and regional structures of the BUSA and BCSA took the opportunity by facilitating and encouraging various reconciliation meetings. Some BUSA and BCSA members have testified that the reconciliation initiatives helped them to come to terms with the past and indeed, they forgave and were reconciled with their brothers and sisters. The findings of my ethnographic work conducted in 2007 and 2009 suggest that the majority of the old members of the two churches in the Eastern Cape are still battling with the past and have not taken steps towards reconciliation.⁹

The Pauline Concept of Reconciliation

This section of the article explores the Pauline concept of reconciliation and argues that, according to this New Testament teaching, it is compulsory for Christians to work towards and seek reconciliation with all humankind and with each other. It further argues that this is not a request but a command for those who claim to have been reconciled with Christ. The BUSA and BCSA members who still live at enmity with each other are urged to demonstrate their faith by confessing and forgiving each other in order for true reconciliation to take place. The main source for this study will be the New Testament, though some references will be extracted from the Old Testament in order to trace this concept through the Judea-Christian literature. A particular focus will be on how Paul conceptualises reconciliation. This involves a discussion on how Paul uses this term in his letters in conjunction with Christ's work of reconciliation. A study of the background of Pauline concept of reconciliation yields four principles of reconciliation. The study then describes how the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape Province integrated these four principles in their own reconciliation just as the TRC did during the reconciliation process in South Africa as a whole.

There are basically two reasons for focusing on Paul rather than other NT writers: his immense contribution to NT theology, and reconciliation is one his major themes, in parallel with and equivalent to justification.¹⁰

⁸ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... ", 89.

⁹ Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... ", 123.

¹⁰ Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 67.

1. The Background of the Pauline Concept of Reconciliation

Scholars have different views regarding the background of the Pauline concept of 'reconciliation'. Some believe that 'reconciliation' with its cognates is of Pauline origin; others argue that Paul borrowed it from Hellenistic literature, and still others think that Paul adopted it from the Old Testament.

Those who argue that the concept of reconciliation is of Pauline origin state that this term is not found in the Old Testament or Jewish traditions.¹¹ Breytenbach argues that there is no evidence of a religious usage of this terminology in atheistic, pagan or Hellenistic literature. Paul might have borrowed it from the secular world and transformed its basic diplomatic terminology for use in the realm of religion.¹² The term was used most prominently for peace treaties in politico-military contexts, where in order to achieve reconciliation in a period of war or mutual hostility, a general amnesty was arranged. The result was that hostility would be changed to friendship.¹³

Those who argue that Paul borrowed this term from the Hellenistic literature, state that "reconciliation" (*καταλλαγή*), as used by Paul (2 Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22) was a word used for monetary exchange in the Hellenistic world. It meant "the making of what one has into something other" or, by extension, one becomes a new person by exchanging places with another.¹⁴

The scholars who argue that Paul took this term from the Old Testament, stress that the term "reconciliation" has a strong OT background, referring to the action of God who reaches out to his people in order to end enmity between them. Paul might have developed this term from the fourth servant song of Isaiah (52:13-53:12).¹⁵ This point of view is supported by parallels between Isaiah 52:13-53:13 where the death and suffering of Jesus as the Messiah makes humankind righteous and gives them peace¹⁶, and 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 where the sinless Christ's vicarious death is affirmed as the source of God's justification and reconciliation of human beings to himself.

The last view does not necessarily oppose the above views but argues that, irrespective of where Paul got or adopted that term, Paul writes from his personal encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus. To support this view, Kim points out that:

¹¹ William Gentz, *Dictionary of the Bible and Religion*. (Abingdon: Nashville, 1986), 323.

¹² Cillers Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", in W.S. Vorster, ed. *Reconciliation and Reconstruction: Creative Options for a Rapidly Changing South Africa*. Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium of the Institute for Theological Research (UNISA) held at the University of South Africa in Pretoria on 3 and 4 September 1986. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1986), 8.

¹³ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 10.

¹⁴ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 3.

¹⁵ Ntombana, "*An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .*",

¹⁶ Kenneth D. Litwak, "The Use of Quotations from Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in the New Testament." (*JETS* 26/4 1983), 385-386.

Whether Paul found this term from the Old Testament tradition or diplomatic sphere, his formulation of God “reconciling” human beings to him is unique and profound. He developed his term out of his theological reflection on his personal experience on the Damascus road.¹⁷

According to this view Paul was alienated from God and had taken it upon himself to persecute Christians (Acts 9:2). Through his encounter with Christ he received peace and was reconciled with God and with the Christian community. He then writes out of his own experience of reconciliation with Christ. Paul might have adopted the concept of reconciliation from somewhere but he interpreted his own experience of reconciliation with Christ and the Church. He understands himself as one who was an enemy of both God and the Church. His experience is that, after reconciling with God through Christ, the Church was able to receive him. This is a clear indication of reconciliation being effected between both man and God (Acts 9:28).¹⁸

The views of the above theologians might differ concerning the origin of the Pauline theology of reconciliation, but they agree that the term implies agreement after estrangement, with the apparent theological premise that sin has separated humanity from God and that God took the initiative to restore the broken relationship with humanity. Christ became the second Adam (Rom. 5:12-15), who came to restore the perfect relationship that existed in Eden before the first Adam disobeyed God (Gen. 1:26-29).

2. The Originator and Recipients of Reconciliation

Paul’s Damascus road experience that led to his reconciliation with both God and the Church challenges Christians to acknowledge that reconciliation has to take place between God and humans as well as among human beings. Paul uses two Greek terms “*καταλλαγε*” and “*καταλλασω*” (1 Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22) to refer to the absolute reconciliation between God and human kind as well as between persons. Human beings having been alienated from God by sin, but God the merciful Creator has provided the means of reconciliation in Christ. This puts God as the subject and human kind as the object or recipient of reconciliation.¹⁹

The “*καταλλαγε*” created by God is thus a completed act that precedes all human actions.²⁰ Therefore, before reconciliation can take place between human beings, there has to be God’s intervention. The scholar above suggests that reconciliation begins when a person accepts the gift of grace that is in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Breytenbach puts it aptly that, “any concept

¹⁷ Seyoon Kim, “2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation” in *Novum Testament, An International Quarterly for the New Testament and Related Studies*, (March 1997), 38.

¹⁸ Kim, “2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation,” 44.

¹⁹ Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 168.

²⁰ Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, 169.

of reconciliation that does not take seriously the death of Christ as the event by which God changes his sinful enemy into his justified child, denounces its own apostolic origin".²¹

This notion not only recognises God as the author of reconciliation, but also introduces a very strong Christology, in the sense that true reconciliation can only come through Christ.²² Furthermore, God is not revealed anywhere else but in Christ. Reading from 2 Corinthians 5:18 we see that God himself is the author or initiator of reconciliation, reconciling humankind to Himself. This is the theological novelty in comparison with non-Christian religious thought, which knows the deity only as an object of the reconciliation of human beings, implying that it is by their works that human beings qualify for God's reconciliation. The biblical concept of reconciliation of person to person and God to humankind is entirely based on the need to be right with God. Therefore when people are made right with God, they realise their need to be reconciled with each other. In simple terms, it is in being reconciled with God that our eyes are opened to the need to be reconciled with other people. This puts an emphasis on God as the originator and humankind as the receiver of reconciliation.

Romans 5:10 says that it is while Christians were enemies of God that they were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. The state of being "enemies" not only expresses humanity's hostile attitude to God but also signifies that until a change of attitude takes place, humans are under condemnation, exposed to God's wrath. By surrendering their lives to Christ Jesus they receive a reconciliation they did not even deserve. God Himself has initiated reconciliation and his invitation is always open for all to respond by accepting His reconciliation initiative in Christ Jesus.

3. Four NT Principles that Relate to Reconciliation

In this section I will be discussing four principles or church practices that relate to reconciliation and further argue the importance of such practices for the BUSA and the BCSA as Christians. These are confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration/reparation. These principles are said to be conditions of reconciliation.²³ For people of faith, the experience of confession and forgiveness, justice and peace, and repentance are what reconciliation is all about.²⁴ The experience of the TRC illustrates the importance of the four reconciliation principles. The TRC proceedings were not necessarily led and

²¹ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shifts in Christian Soteriology", 16.

²² H. Russel Botman, "The Church Partitioned or the Church Reconciled? South Africa's Theological and Historical Dilemma" in William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, eds. *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa: A Multicultural Dialogue in Comparative Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 112.

²³ Jonathan Smit, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Tentative Religious and Theological Perspectives", in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (April 1995), 5.

²⁴ Botman, "The Church Partitioned or the Church Reconciled?", 107.

guided by Biblical principles but these four principles were incorporated into the truth and reconciliation process. It was necessary for the perpetrator to come forward by applying to the TRC for amnesty.²⁵ In some cases where perpetrators did not come forward to confess and the TRC viewed their presence as necessary, the TRC would summon perpetrators to appear. The perpetrator would be given a chance to confess all his/her actions in the presence of the victims, their families or representatives.²⁶ It was important for the perpetrator to confess in detail how he had committed violations of human rights prior to receiving amnesty.

In cases where a person was killed and their bodies were not already found, the perpetrator would have to disclose where the bodies were hidden. The information had to satisfy the TRC commission and victims or their families. The perpetrators were not only supposed to narrate the events but would also have to show remorse for their actions and to request forgiveness from the TRC, the victims and the country. The victims or their families were given an opportunity to forgive the perpetrators. In some cases the victims did express a need to forgive and were reconciled with perpetrators, and in some cases the victims or their families were not ready to forgive and they were given some time to process the information until they were ready to forgive. Finally, the TRC made recommendations how the previously white government, companies, groups, communities and individuals that benefited from apartheid could play a part in the reparation process to help restore the dignity of the victims. Some of reparation measures involved policies such as Affirmative Action (AA), Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and reparations and financial incentives that served as tokens to the victims or their families.

3.1 Confession

The New Testament uses two main Greek words in referring to confession, “*ομολογεω*” and “*εξολογεω*”. The term “*ομολογεω*” is found 26 times while “*εξολογεω*” is found only 10 times. The noun “*ομολογεα*”, found 6 times, is confined to Christian confession (2 Cor. 9:13; 1 Tim. 6:12), and is used with fixed liturgical connotations.²⁷ The term “*ομολογεω*” is used occasionally to denote a confession of sin, but more often it is employed to acknowledge, admit, or declare that something is so. In her definition of confession, Gallagher puts an emphasis on both admission of guilt and testimony as descriptive historical accounts that involves acts of memory and disclosure as well as confession of faith in Christ, which brings a change in the

²⁵ Mark Sanders, “Truth, Telling, Questioning: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Antjie Krog’s *Country of My Skull*, and Literature After Apartheid”. *Transformation*, Vol. 42, (June 2000), 75.

²⁶ Pieter Meiring, “Truth and Reconciliation: The South African Experience”, in William E. Van Vugt and G. Daan Cloete, eds., *Race and Reconciliation in South Africa: A Multicultural Dialogue in Comparative Perspective*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 196.

²⁷ Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 156.

lifestyle of the sinner.²⁸ In Gallagher's definition one notes the importance of public confession. Confession is not only to admit guilt but also allows Christ to remove us from wrongdoing (1 John 1:9).

3.2 Repentance

To "repent" in contemporary English means either (1) to express regret (a thought, attitude, or act) or, (2) much more frequently, to regret and change from one attitude or allegiance to another.²⁹ To get an accurate idea of the precise meaning of this important word in the New Testament, it is necessary to consider the original Greek terms used.

In the New Testament, the Greek words "μετανοια" and "μετανοιω" are used to refer to repentance.³⁰ Usually the above terms express repentance in the full sense of a complete change of one's way of life (although the sense of regret is operative in Luke. 17:3.), the spiritual change implied in a sinner's return to God.³¹ Thus "μετανοιω" is used as an equivalent to the Hebrew נָשׂוּב, "turn," in the Old Testament. It is employed in this sense by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38). The idea of repentance expressed by this word is intimately associated with spiritual transformation and Christian life. It is associated with processes in which human agency is prominent, such as conversion (Acts 3:19) and faith (20:21), and also with those experiences and blessings of which God alone is the author, such as remission and forgiveness of sin (Luke. 24:47; Acts 5:31).

In secular Greek the terms "μετανοια" and "μετανοιω" originally referred to knowledge acquired later, then to the change of mind to which such knowledge could lead.³² Since a change of mind implies recognition that the previous opinion was wrong, the terms acquired a sense of regret or remorse. Thus the terms came to have an emotional as well as an intellectual sense. The fact is that repentance is about *change*, and this change involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God. The parable of the prodigal son is an outstanding illustration of this change. When the prodigal son realised his wrongs, he left his wrong ways, went to his father and repented, even considering himself less than a servant (Luke 15: 11-31).

²⁸ Susan V. Gallagher. *Truth and Reconciliation: The Confessional Mode in South African Literature*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 4.

²⁹ Angus Stevenson and Maurice Waite, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

³⁰ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromley, trans. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 10. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 882.

³¹ William D. Chamberlain. *The Meaning of Repentance*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), 25.

³² Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, 156.

3.3 Forgiveness

Forgiveness generally refers to a specific act of pardoning. Someone repents and someone forgives. "Repentance" and "forgiveness" are taken as two sides of a process in which the perpetrator of an evil act "confesses" his or her remorse and the victim of that act grants pardon. One authority states that Jesus is the 'discoverer' of forgiveness and true forgiveness is found in Him and through Him.³³ According to traditional Christian teachings, the forgiveness of others is amongst the spiritual duties of the Christian believer. God is generally considered to be the original source of all forgiveness, which is made possible through the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus, and is freely available to the repentant believer. Forgiveness includes taking of no account of the sin that has been committed (Mark 2:5; John 8:11), acceptance of the sinner (Luke 15 20), deliverance from the dominion of the evil powers, and delivery into the kingdom of Christ.

3.4 Restoration and Restitution

It is not possible to talk about restoration without restitution. These two concepts or terms are used in both the New and the Old Testaments with a similar meaning. The difference is that restoration is used mostly when referring to "re-union" between God and His people. In this restoration God is the initiator, restoring his people in the sense of mending his relationship with them - bearing in mind that this state of brokenness was created due to the disobedience of human kind. Moreover the brokenness often resulted in drought and suffering for the people. When the Lord restored them, drought and suffering are replaced by prosperity and blessings (Joel 2:25). Confession of sins and repentance are means by which the sinner reaches out to God for forgiveness.³⁴ The restoration as a favour of God is received in return, restoration in the sense that the broken relationship between God and human kind is mended and put behind them.

Different from restoration, restitution is not applicable when referring to reconciliation between God and humankind. We are thus not bound to make sacrifices to God for the pain that our sins cause Him. We cannot not pay or give Him restitution, because he does not suffer damage on account of our sins.³⁵ Restitution is mostly used in referring to the process of paying back by the offender for their offence to the victim. In Numbers 5:6-7 we have an example of this restitution:

When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged (NIV).

³³ Karl Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Ralph Manheim, (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1962), 35.

³⁴ Gentz, *Dictionary of the Bible and Religion*, 169.

³⁵ Kim, "2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation", 28.

Even though there is mention of unfaithfulness to the Lord in this scripture the payment is done to the victim and not to the Lord. It is true that restitution cannot remove the pain caused, but it does find ways of repairing, healing and rehabilitating the victims. Villa-Vicencio argues for a true restorative justice process where the dignity, reintegration and reparation of victims are prioritized.³⁶ The main purpose of restoration, restitution or reparation should aim at uplifting the lives of victims, and removing all the imbalances that were caused by perpetrators or their system.

In his argument regarding no easy reconciliation, Roldanus says that true repentance requires a form of satisfaction to both God and humanity.³⁷ This repentance should in many ways bring compensation to God and fellow human beings. Reconciliation is restitution portrayed within the framework of a theological understanding of salvation. Louw equates restitution to justice, when restitution is done, and then justice is being completed towards the victims.³⁸ Louw's comment is very interesting:

Justice/restitution versus reconciliation is theologically speaking a false contrast and opposition. Justice is the doing part of reconciliation, while reconciliation is the ground motivation for doing justice.³⁹

In the light of this argument I would suggest that reconciliation without restitution is meaningless. The suggestion for a need for reconciliation means that there has been misunderstanding, abuse or imbalances. A reconciliation that does not seek to rectify the above through restoration, reparation and restitution is a false reconciliation.

The Reconciliation Process of the BUSA and BCSA

After the induction of the first South African democratic government, one of its major assignments was to provide a stage to heal the past and to create a reconciliation platform for both victims and perpetrators. The TRC became a possible vehicle to facilitate reconciliation in the troubled South Africa. South Africans, including individuals, groups, political parties, business companies, religious groups, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) responded to the TRC and came forward to initiate confession and reconciliation. The BUSA and the BCSA responded to the call by the TRC and had their respective general secretaries, Rev. T. Rae for the BUSA and Rev. D. Hoffmeister for the BCSA, make public confessions on behalf of their organizations.⁴⁰ Both leaders

³⁶ Charles Villa-Vicencio and Erick Doxtader, ed., *To Repair the Irreparable: Reparation and Construction in South Africa*. (Claremont: David Philip, 2004), 64.

³⁷ Johannes Roldanus, "Theology of Reconciliation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 92 (Sept 1995): 26.

³⁸ Daniel J. Louw, "Wisdom as a New Paradigm for Practical Theology in a Post Apartheid Society," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 90 (March 1995): 52.

³⁹ Louw, "Wisdom as a New Paradigm for Practical Theology . . .," 53.

⁴⁰ Confession submission to the TRC by Rev. D. Hoffmeister in 1997 (http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/bcsa_sub.htm).

repented on behalf of their organisations and expressed willingness and commitment to reconcile with each other. The submissions were followed by various reconciliation and unity meetings facilitated by the National leaders of the two churches. The national consultations and reconciliations had their own strengths and weaknesses that I discuss at length in my Master's Dissertation.⁴¹ The reconciliation process was encouraged at the regional and local church level. Regional experiences were different, depending on their past experiences. In some regions most of the churches joined the Union and there were very few members of the Convention, like in the Eastern Cape. In some regions like Gauteng, the majority of the churches remained with the Convention. Each region had a plan of dealing with the reconciliation process.

The Impact of the Merger Talks and Separation of the 1980s in the Grass Roots of the Eastern Cape

In the Eastern Cape 70% of churches joined the Union. This makes the Union stronger than the Convention in terms of numbers. The majority of the local church members were not aware of the details. Furthermore the friction was felt differently from area to area. In areas like East London, Queenstown and former Transkei, all churches automatically joined the Union. These are the areas where confrontation was not felt at the grassroots level between BUSA and BCSA. Pastors and their families as well as a few church leaders felt the results of the confrontation. In most of the churches in East London, pastors went to register themselves as well as their churches with the Union. Members were only aware after a long time that they were not with the Convention, but with the Union. This did not bother them much as they still did not understand why some were Convention while others were Union and what the difference was. Another reason is that the pastors' privileges such as salaries, pension funds, etc. were supported by the Union. All the ministers and churches standing with the Convention lost those privileges. In some cases the church members just supported their pastors due to the view that pastors know better and can better decide what is right for the church.

In some areas like Alice and Middledrift, in villages such as Njwaxa, Ngcamngeni Qanda etc, there were major conflicts between BUSA and BCSA members. Some family members joined the Union while others remained with the Convention. This caused major conflicts in the families as well the community. In Njwaxa Baptist Church, there were two groups in one building - the left side of the building was for the Union and the right side for the Convention. During the offering, each group used its own plate. The issue was

Confession submission by Rev. T. Rae in Cape Town in 1997
(http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/commiss/trc/bap_sub.htm).

⁴¹ Luvuyo Ntombana, "An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process Between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union of South Africa," an M.Th. Dissertation, University of Fort Hare, 2007.

that both groups were claiming the building as theirs. These conflicts went to the extent of involving community leaders as well as the police for resolution. The involvement of community leaders made things worse as they did not understand what was going on but just took sides and the less popular group was requested to dissolve and were not allowed in that village.

In some areas like Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth, some members joined the Union, others the Convention. In cases where the majority of members joined the Convention and took over the building, the Union would immediately build another building for the few members who joined them.

The Eastern Cape Province Reconciliation Initiatives

The churches in the Eastern Cape Province initiated reconciliation and unity meetings that started in 1996 and ended in 2003. The group involved in the reconciliation initiatives was called Concerned Baptists (CB). Some of the meetings were for the provincial executive committees, some were spiritual services opened for all members and some were retreat and meetings for pastors and spouses. In addition, the CB facilitated pulpit exchange programs where a Convention pastor would preach at a Union Church and visa versa.

The Provincial presidents, Rev. Madolo from the Convention and Rev. Dyasi from the Union were requested to lead the process. Members attended as individuals, not as churches. The initiative was not compulsory. As a result some Union and Convention members took part and some opted not to do so. Some people took part at the beginning and later withdrew while some did not participate at first and later joined. Almost a quarter of informants responded that even though the CB initiatives ended, they were still looking forward to its good spirit and have further benefited from it, including some who spoke or fellowshiped with their brother and sisters for the first time since the 1980's split. Others said that they took the opportunity to confess and forgive each other during the CB process.

The majority of informants responded that the CB initiatives were a failure, complaining that the main aim was not clearly explained, that they were not sure if the intention was reconciliation and unity or just reconciliation, or to create a new Eastern Cape Baptist church. It appeared that there were three groups; those who supported reconciliation, those who expected the BUSA members to come back to the Convention, and those who expected that a new Eastern Cape Baptist denomination would be started. The leaders said some people found the aims and objectives were not clearly spelled out was because they themselves did not have all the answers but were following the lead of the Holy Spirit and were open to any direction that the Lord would lead them towards. Some of the members expressed concerns that the reconciliation meetings excluded White Baptists in the Eastern Cape.

The ethnographic work I conducted suggests that young people under 30 years of age of both the BUSA and the BCSA do not harbor any resentment

towards each other or anyone in relation to the Baptist conflict of the 1980s. For instance when some youth members of the Union in East London study or work in Port Elizabeth, they join a Convention church and visa versa. The youth are not really concerned about whether a person is Union or Convention. This was contrary to the older generation who were still arguing about who broke away from whom for what reason, who was right and who was wrong, etc. The findings suggest that there is still a lot of resentment amongst the older generation of both the BUSA and the BCSA. Some of the members openly said that they had not forgiven their brothers and sisters. Most members said that the reconciliation process took place and achieved nothing and each group now has moved on to do 'Gods work'. There was an emphasis on doing 'Gods work' and not focusing on petty issues.

Convention and Union and the Four Principles of Reconciliation

In reference to the four principles of reconciliation discussed in this paper, the CB fellowships did not sit down to strategise about how the two bodies would achieve the four principles of reconciliation. The CB facilitated and encouraged forgiveness through discussions, spiritual services and meetings that were centered on repentance, confession and forgiveness. At the Provincial level there was no discussion about reparations, apart from the encouragement that churches should share resources with each other.

In one of the spiritual services Rev. D. Madolo preached on 1 Corinthians 13, talking about love. He encouraged each member to consider how God loved humankind and sacrificed his only son. He said that if members truly loved God and each other, then they should sacrifice pride, historical facts and all other reasons that hinder them from reconciled with others. Members were further encouraged to repent and confess their sins to each other. In some services people were encouraged to act during the service and go to their brothers and sisters and forgive them and also ask for forgiveness. During the service members moved around and went to other members to forgive and pray with them.⁴² Reconciliation, just like repentance, is a personal commitment. As much as the TRC, the regional, and the national leadership of the BUSA and BCSA can encourage their members to reconcile, they cannot force them. That seems to be the case with the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape region. During the spiritual services there was an emphasis on the need to repent, confess, and forgive each other. During the spiritual services responsibilities were shared between BUSA and BCSA members. For instance, in one service the leader would be a Union member and the preacher was a Convention pastor and visa versa.

⁴² Ntombana, "*An Investigation into the Reconciliation and Unity Process... .*", 98.

CONCLUSION

In this article, the Biblical concept of reconciliation and its four principles were discussed and considered as main teachings of the Christian church. Reconciliation is a compulsory principle for all those who call themselves Christian. It is one of the highest practices in the Christian faith and equivalent to justification. It is through being reconciled with God through Jesus Christ that one becomes a Christian. In this sense reconciliation is a foundation for Christian faith. When someone becomes a Christian, they are called and expected to be reconciled with others. The Convention and the Union, who regard themselves as born again and Evangelical Christians, are expected to live by their faith, but it has not been so for some in the Eastern Cape. It appears that the BUSA and BCSA in the Eastern Cape responded to the challenge by the TRC and the national executives of both churches and coordinated reconciliation initiatives. The initiatives had some success and a number of people celebrated its work, but the majority of older people saw it as a waste of resources and time. Some of these older people complained that the main purposes of the activities were not well discussed by involved parties and that this created mistrust among members. As a result some withdrew from the process. Some said others had their own agendas to fulfill while others said that some of the Union pastors were too scared to move away and lose their privileges from the white people. In essence, based on these responses, one can conclude that there was a time that reconciliation between the two groups was a priority but now that is no longer the case. The majority of members from the two groups are still not reconciled and still hold resentment towards each other. The only way they are dealing with it is to avoid it and concentrate more on what they call "the work of God", which includes evangelism among the "lost", the un-churched. Some Convention and Union members preferred to concentrate on reaching out to others and in the process they turned a blind eye to reconciliation, a core concept that defines Christian existence. For without reconciliation there would be no Christianity, because it is upon being reconciled with Christ that human beings become Christians.⁴³

The contention in this paper is that the unreconciled members of the Eastern Cape must reconsider their faith and commitment to Christ by seeking reconciliation with each other in order to be a living witness to others. The Bible does not propose reconciliation as an option but as a mandate to those who are believers. It is time for each individual to be humble and approach their counterparts for reconciliation. Christians are products of the humility of Christ that made reconciliation possible. There can be no reconciliation without humility. It is when one realises their sinful nature and their need for humility that they are worthy of God's reconciliation. The key to reconciliation between humans and God as well as among human beings lies in humility.

⁴³ Breytenbach, "Reconciliation: Shift in Soteriology", 16.

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Improving African Christian Leadership: A Biblical View

by Emmanuel Kwasi Amofo

Introduction

Much has been said, researched and written about the shortcomings of African Christian leadership today. Both in the church and in the academy there is much handwringing and remonstrance about the sad and unacceptable state of African Christian leadership. Everywhere we turn there are stories of Christian leaders embroiled in financial and sexual scandals, and power abuse, with their behaviour characterized by a general display of the same moral degeneracy, insensitivity, abrasiveness and incompetence that is all too evident in secular African leadership. In many African church denominations today there is a general view that most senior church leaders are not even born again, with no appreciable walk with God, and that they have gained their positions of leadership through nepotism, tribalism and even bribery and corruption. Many of these “leaders” see their positions as careers and personal businesses to be gained and protected at all costs. The widespread nominalism, the lack of commitment to missions and evangelism, the lack of meaningful discipleship, and the growing syncretism that permeates the African church today have often been blamed on this sad state of African church leadership.

It seems to me that a fundamental biblical view of the issue is a frequently missing or under-emphasized perspective in the current debate about how to improve African Christian leadership. It is this perspective that this article seeks to briefly highlight.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Emergence of a Christian Leader

The first thing to note is that every genuine Christian leader is called by God the Father into his leadership position. For this reason God the Holy Spirit plays an indispensable, predominant, central and defining role in the emergence and development of the Christian leader - from his selection, through the process of his equipping to his ever-growing maturity.

Elliston draws from the biblical examples of the leadership development of King David and the apostles Paul and Peter to illustrate his reflections on the vital role of the Holy Spirit in the emergence and development of Christian leaders. Of the Holy Spirit's role in the selection of the leader, Elliston says, “He matches the person with the task, followers and situation.”¹ Of his role in

¹ Edgar J. Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992, p. 100.

gifting and empowering the leader Elliston observes, “The gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . provide the initial and on-going empowerment . . . for ministry. They may be seen as part of the Spirit’s legitimation of His selection process”.² Concerning the Holy Spirit’s equipping of the leader, Elliston goes on to say, “The Holy Spirit is responsible for the equipping of men and women for ministry. He superintends the whole process. It is He who works to have them thoroughly fit for ministry”.³ Adeyemo concurs with this by observing that God pours Himself by His Holy Spirit into the life of the Christian leader to whom He has assigned any responsibility.⁴ Elliston notes that the Holy Spirit works through existing leaders to develop them through counseling and discipline⁵ and that the Holy Spirit also plays a key role in the maturing of the Christian leader by bringing the leader through various crises, conflicts and even life-threatening circumstances. These, he notes, test, refine and greatly aid in the maturing and effectiveness of the leader.⁶

Surveying the landscape of African Christian leadership today it may not be an exaggeration to say that this calling, equipping and maturing role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of African Christian leaders is sadly lacking.

Biblical Images of African Christian Leadership

African Christian leadership, unfortunately, is more often than not modeled upon and shaped by the African cultural understanding and worldview of the uses and purposes of leadership and power than by biblical concepts of leadership. African traditional concepts of leadership embrace the ideas of might, material wealth, worldly wisdom and obeisance to ancestors and ancestral spirits.⁷

Heavily influenced by this worldview and cultural understanding of leadership, African Christian leadership frequently displays values that are self-serving, intolerant, nepotistic, autocratic, inefficient and inconsiderate of the real and felt needs of the people they lead. Leadership is perceived to be a means to personal aggrandizement and material wealth. Commenting on this, Osei-Mensah writes, “Such leaders have no real conception of serving others; they promote themselves and have no thought of being examples of godliness. Instead they lord it over those in their trust”.⁸

² Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 101.

³ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 102.

⁴ Tokunbo Adeyemo, *Africa’s Enigma and Leadership Solutions*, Nairobi: WordAlive, 2009, p. 22.

⁵ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 103.

⁶ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, pp. 105-106.

⁷ Tokunbo Adeyemo, *Leadership in the Africa Bible Commentary*, Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006, p. 546.

⁸ Gottfried Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, Accra, Ghana: Africa Christians Press, 1990, p. 25.

For this reason, sadly, the first biblical image that best describes the typical understanding of African Christian leadership is the image of the failed shepherd leaders of Israel in Ezekiel 34 who took care of themselves and not the sheep by eating the curds, clothing themselves with the wool and eating the meat provided by the sheep. The second biblical image that best describes the typical understanding of African Christian leaders is found in the words of Jesus from Matthew 20:25, “the rulers of the Gentiles who lord it over them and their high officials who exercise authority over them.”

The key to changing this unfortunate profile of African Christian leadership is to heed the counsel of Osei-Mensah who says we must allow the Bible to judge our African culture and to jettison our ungodly African models of leadership that are incompatible with biblical principles of servant-leadership.⁹ Clinton notes that, as fallen human beings, our natural instinct is not to serve but to be served, and that the idea of serving others is very unnatural to us. He says, “No one seems to be born with servanthood as a controlling attitude for leadership functions. Nor do many cultures shape towards servanthood as a significant value for leadership thinking”.¹⁰ Stanko adds, “The issue of service is one of the hardest concepts for leaders to grasp”.¹¹

Developing a servant leadership spirit first requires that we have the new nature that Christ gives us by His Holy Spirit when we are born again. Osei-Mensah says, “The first prerequisite for servant-leadership is a genuine conversion experience”.¹² With the conversion experience as his foundation, the Christian leader then commits himself to developing a renewed mind as Osei-Mensah notes.¹³ A renewed mind, he goes on to observe, enables the Christian leader to humble himself to serve the congregation of God’s people. Such leaders cultivate the mind of Christ and develop a spiritual dimension that transforms their thinking and acting.¹⁴ In addition to the renewing of the mind, a lifelong process, the third prerequisite for developing servant-leadership is, in Osei-Mensah’s view, “a lifestyle of exemplary obedience” to Christ. He observes that “the people we are called to lead are more likely to cooperate and submit if they know it is to the Lord they are submitting, and if they see us showing the way by bowing our knee to king Jesus”.¹⁵

⁹ Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Robert J. Clinton, *Leadership Series: Conclusions on Leadership Style*. Altadena, CA: Barnabas Resources, 1992, p. 46.

¹¹ John Stanko, *So Many Leaders, So Little Leadership*, Nairobi: WordAlive, 2000, p. 23.

¹² Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, p. 24.

¹³ Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, p. 24.

¹⁴ Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, p. 26.

¹⁵ Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders*, p. 33.

African Christian Leadership Spiritual Formation

It is only as a leader draws close to God and develops intimacy with Him, learning to hear and to obey Him, that the leader can lead God's people in God's way. Notes Eims, "If the Christian leader tries to put on an outward show with no inward fortification of purity and holiness before God, one day a test will reveal his or her true nature and character. Thus, the leader must live a pure life".¹⁶ The development of the leader's spirituality must be a conscious one that includes prayerfulness, unwavering faith in God, determined obedience to scripture and an attitude of life-long learning.

Prayerfulness is a value that is enacted in the Christian leader's life, for example, by a habit of waking up long before daybreak on most mornings to spend devotional time in the presence of God. This habit enables the Christian leader to develop a growing intimacy with the Lord in which he learns to daily speak to and listen to God. The insights that God gives the leader into scripture, into the daily affairs of his life and his ministry assignments will then form a firm foundation for God's guidance and direction of his leadership.

Unwavering faith in God is a value that enables the Christian leader to respond to the ups and downs of life and ministry on the basis of God's revealed character of divine love for and His faithfulness to the Christian leader. This faith will calm him in the face of panic-inducing situations and enable him to make godly, sane and intelligent choices. It will enable him to treat difficult persons and tough circumstances with forbearance, humility and patience. It will enable him to adopt attitudes of hope and expectant assurance when facing tough assignments and limited resources related to his Christian ministry and leadership.

The Christian leader's determined obedience to scripture is based on seeing the scripture as God's revelation of Himself and His will and purposes for humanity and as the Christian's final standard for faith and practice. Such an understanding of scripture will make the leader seek to obey its commands, believe its promises and follow its examples in his life and ministry. Scripture will then be the non-negotiable plumb line that guides his relationships, his conduct and his Christian ministry and leadership.

An attitude of life-long learning acts as an important fulcrum of personal development in the Christian leader's life. This manifests itself in a commitment to reading widely on subjects related to scriptural subjects, theological concerns and social and historical subjects. Such focused reading will keep the Christian leader informed and able to relate to a wide range of

¹⁶ LeRoy Eims, *Be The Leader You Were Meant To Be*, Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2001, p. 30.

issues that come up from time to time in his work and leadership.¹⁷ The cultivation of habits of life-long learning and attitudes of teachableness make leaders open to improving their knowledge and understanding of scripture and other subjects that matter to their congregations, empowering them to respond more practically and effectively to the felt needs of those whom God has put in their care. In an age of much adult learning in which there is now a plethora of guided learning opportunities no Christian leader has a valid excuse not to avail themselves of these opportunities that can so significantly improve and enhance their leadership.¹⁸

These values, when they undergird leadership, demonstrate the vital linkage between spirituality and effective Christian leadership. These values enable the Christian leader to develop attitudes of servant leadership that seek to serve God and His people in humble self-giving as modeled for us by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27) and as His apostles modeled for us in the New Testament.¹⁹ Barna believes that they enable the Christian leader to live an exemplary life that is obvious to both Christians and non-Christians.²⁰ These values promote the absence of greed for money, a willingness to serve, exemplary behaviour (1 Peter 5:2-3) and a display of spiritual maturity and the fruit of the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The Godly Management of Power by Christian Leaders

African Christian leaders' use of power and authority reveal the basic motivations and values that undergird their leadership. Lee defines *power* as the ability to do something or to prevent something from being done and *authority* as the right to do something. In the church context Lee notes that the godly use of power and authority requires Christian leaders to learn how to use both as stewards of Christ and on behalf of His mission.²¹ Lee draws on the research work of psychotherapist Rollo May to identify and explain five different kinds of power and authority. These are *exploitative power* that uses force and often leads to violence, *manipulative power* that uses people as pawns, *competitive power* that seeks to win while others lose, *nutrient power* that is used for the well-being of others and *integrative power* that is used with the cooperation and consensus of others.²² Lee believes that in the church

¹⁷ Stephen R. Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, New York: Free Press, 2003, p. 33.

¹⁸ Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People, Revised Ed.* Reprinted in *Foundations for Christian Leadership Supplemental Readings: Course Number LDR 5013. First Ed.* Springfield, MO: Global University, 2010, pp. 37-38.

¹⁹ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 68.

²⁰ George Barna, *Leaders on Leadership*, Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997, p. 84.

²¹ Harris W. Lee, *Effective Church Leadership: A Practical Sourcebook*, Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, GCSDA, 2003, p.73.

²² Lee, *Effective Church Leadership: A Practical Sourcebook*, p. 74.

context *nutrient* and *integrative power* are the most appropriate forms of power that should be used. This is because, he says, “Nutrient conveys the idea of nurture, one of the primary ministries of the church. Integrative power is compatible with the . . . democratic or participative type of governance that is characteristic of most congregations”.²³

In Africa the ability of church leaders to use *nutrient* and *integrative* forms of power in their leadership calls for qualities and priorities that depend largely on their spiritual maturity and submission to the lordship of Christ as demonstrated by their trust and obedience. Elliston notes that “trust and obedience provide the essential stimulation for both spiritual and ministry maturation” of Christian leaders.²⁴

Conclusion

It is as African Christian leaders take this overall biblical view of Christian leadership and as they seriously learn to develop these values in their exercise of church and other forms of Christian leadership that the Lord will empower them to overcome the restraining forces of appetites and passions, pride and pretension, and unbridled aspiration and ambition.²⁵ It is then that their leadership will be rewarded with the fruitfulness that will please their Lord and Master and be a blessing to his church on this continent.

African Christian leaders must first learn to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ, becoming more like Christ as they follow Him. This will develop both their character and competence and lend greater credibility to their leadership as their lived-out trust of Christ results in faithfulness, conviction, confidence and commitment. The Christian leader's obedience, Elliston observes, is displayed by his faithfulness to God's Word and his submission to God's clear guidance. Obedience shows the leader to be a person of integrity and a trustworthy and accountable steward of God's flock (1 Corinthians 4:1-2 and 1 Peter 5:1-4). As African Christian leaders exhibit trust and obedience in their leadership, they will “mature internally in spiritual formation and externally in ministering”.²⁶ Fernando says, “Nothing short of total obedience is normal for one who follows a resurrected and victorious Master”.²⁷ Nowhere is this truth more urgently needed today than in African Christian leadership if African society is to be transformed by the truth of the Gospel.

²³ Lee, *Effective Church Leadership: A Practical Sourcebook*, p. 75.

²⁴ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 153.

²⁵ Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, pp. 50-54.

²⁶ Elliston, *Home Grown Leaders*, p. 162.

²⁷ Ajith Fernando, *Leadership Lifestyle*, Mumbai, India: GLS Publishing, 1985, p. 106.

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2. **“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 25:11).** Seek to communicate clearly. Avoid ambiguity, convoluted grammar, unnecessary technical language, and fancy words. Clear writing gives birth to deep understanding.
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David G. Firth and Philip S. Johnston, Editors

***Interpreting Deuteronomy:
Issues and Approaches***

Nottingham, England: Apollos; and Downers Grove, Ill.:

InterVarsity, 2012

\$28.00 US (list price on Amazon.com)

Paperback, 288 pages

ISBN: 978-1-84474-597-5

Jamie Viands, Scott Christian University

Interpreting Deuteronomy: Issues and Approaches is the fruit of the 2011 Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament Study Group and the third in a series of books devoted to current “issues and approaches” in OT books (following *Interpreting the Psalms* [2005] and *Interpreting Isaiah* [2009]). It is not intended to serve as an introduction to the book nor to engage with “scholarly minutiae,” but rather to “bridge the gap” between the two (p.14). This collection of essays thus assumes a basic knowledge of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomy scholarship and draws the reader deeper into the themes and issues found in this theologically rich book.

The book’s eleven contributors form a diverse cast. Most, including the editors, teach or study in the UK (six contributors), but the US (three), Australia (one), and Asia (one) are represented as well. The group is a mix of seasoned scholars and young, recent PhD graduates (or candidates), including two women. Although some of the most prominent evangelical Deuteronomy scholars are absent, the entries are consistently insightful and well-reasoned and will not disappoint.

The essays are organized in three parts. Part one consists of two entries on current approaches to the book. James Robson reviews the endless debate regarding the compositional history of Deuteronomy, highlighting the seven most significant factors in the debate. He concludes that the evidence ultimately favors an early (i.e., Mosaic) date for the book, but that it has been redacted and edited throughout subsequent centuries, making it difficult to hear Moses’ actual “voice” (p.58). Not all readers will be satisfied with this conclusion, nor with his propensity to emphasize tensions and apparent difficulties within the book without attempting to resolve them. Paul A. Barker provides an excellent introduction to the theology of Deuteronomy by treating some of the book’s primary themes: mission, election, war, politics, community, monotheism, name theology, covenant and grace. In the process,

he provides a wonderful bibliography of resources for further consultation on each theme.

Barker's essay in particular provides the perfect backdrop for the essays in part two, which examine particular themes and issues in Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomic Laws in Deut 12–26 represent half of the book, yet this material is often neglected, perhaps in part because the modern reader gets lost among hundreds of seemingly random laws because they cannot see the "forest," i.e., structure, progression, or purpose within the collection. John H. Walton, revisiting his thesis from 25 years ago, provides such a framework, suggesting that Deut 6–26 can be divided into ten sections which mirror (in order) the "ten commandments" found in Deut 5. As he carefully walks through these chapters, he provides additional evidence for his theory, yet acknowledges when connections to the Decalogue are not as apparent. Overall, his case is compelling, and his insights into the Decalogue, Deut 6–26, and their function for Israel and for the Church are of immense value. Peter T. Vogt argues, contrary to the prevailing critical view, that although sacrifice is centralized at one location (which may change), worship is "decentralized and extended to the people throughout the land" (p.119). Philip S. Johnston examines the roles of the civil leaders (elders, judges, commanders and officers, and the king) in Israelite society as described and/or mandated within Deuteronomy. He observes that, for a law code, there are surprisingly few references to these leaders, especially in the case of the king, and concludes, "[c]ivil responsibility rests largely with individual Israelites, while officialdom exists as a light framework to enable all Israelites to exercise their responsibility" (pp.144–45). David G. Firth explores the various ways in which Deuteronomy encourages the people to pass along Yahwistic faith, which entails explicit commands to teach the faith, regular patterns of worship, Moses' role as a representative teacher, Israel's modeling of the faith to the nations through her lifestyle, and the structure of the book itself. Heath A. Thomas surveys the themes of life and death in Deuteronomy, including their relationship to the covenant, the law, the land, and blessing.

The final essays pertain to uses and interpretations of the book of Deuteronomy subsequent to the time in which it was written. Csilla Saysell explores the post-exilic community's use of Deuteronomic laws to address an intermarriage crisis in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, despite the fact that Deuteronomy does not explicitly address this issue. Greg Goswell examines aspects of Deuteronomy that are not part of the text itself, particularly where the book occurs within the canon of the OT, the name of the book in Greek and Hebrew tradition, and four different ways in which the text has historically been subdivided through paragraph and chapter breaks. This essay helpfully enables the reader to be more conscious of these various factors that inevitably shape the way we view and interpret the book. Jenny Corcoran highlights the significance of the inclusion of the resident alien within the people of God in the covenant renewal ceremony recorded in Deut 29:10–15,

concluding with some useful applications for the Church today. Finally, Christian Hofreiter grapples with perhaps the most troubling issue within Deuteronomy and, arguably, within the entire OT, namely, God's command to destroy the Canaanites. His categorization of the various approaches to this issue will serve as a fantastic introduction to the topic for the beginning student. However, the primary contribution of his essay is his argument that "there is nothing new under the sun:" all of the major positions have existed throughout the history of the Church. His survey includes a discerning critique of the different approaches, but since his primary purpose is to document the history of Christian interpretation, Hofreiter never suggests which of these positions ought to be adopted.

The editors assert that, "all the contributors are committed to the authority of Scripture and therefore to faith-based scholarship" (p.15). Since this is an evangelical collection, it is not surprising that a couple of the contributors are concerned with counteracting critical positions. However, those who believe that the authority and inspiration of Scripture demand Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy may be disturbed by occasional references in a few essays to later editors/redactors and the completion of portions of the book centuries after Moses.

Although the reader with little knowledge of the world of biblical studies will doubtless feel a bit overwhelmed at times, in the estimation of this reviewer *Interpreting Deuteronomy* succeeds in providing a foray into Deuteronomy that builds upon a foundational knowledge of the book without engaging in too much "scholarly minutiae." And therein lies the book's primary contribution. Accordingly, this collection would be ideal for an upper-level undergraduate class devoted to Deuteronomy and should be of interest for any serious student of the OT.

It is essential for African pastors and students of the Bible to have a solid understanding of Deuteronomy given its influence upon the rest of the OT and its central importance in OT theology. This book should help fill this need. However, since it is designed primarily for the classroom (rather than ministry) setting, its value for the contemporary pastor who is seeking to preach and apply Deuteronomy faithfully in the local church is somewhat limited. Although many of the contributors suggest the abiding relevance of Deuteronomy for Christians today, this is often implicit or noted only in passing. Even given the collection's academic orientation, the editors could have included an essay or two in the third part of the book devoted to the use of Deuteronomy in the NT, its contribution to Christian (not just OT) theology, or preaching Deuteronomy, which would have rendered the collection more useful for those engaged in ministry. Nevertheless, there is clearly much in these essays from which the Church can derive faithful applications for her faith and practice.

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Include some form of brief *recommendation* for the reader. For example, is the book best suited for ordinary church members or for a theological educator only? Is it useful for a theological library, or possibly also for textbook use, or even for religious bookshops in Africa to stock? If recommending the title as a textbook, would it be used as a principal text, or merely for supplementary reading? Only occasionally should the recommendation be that *every* theological educator must read the book or *every* library must own a copy.

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Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo

***Poor Economics:
A Radical Rethinking of the Way
to Fight Global Poverty***

New York: Public Affairs, 2011, 320 pages.

Pb. \$15.99. Also available in hardback, Kindle and audio editions.

Reviewed by Sandra F. Joireman

Professor of Political Science at the University of Richmond

Poor Economics is one of the most important books to come out about development in several years. Banerjee and Duflo are both economists who co-direct the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The role of the center is to use experimental data to determine which sorts of interventions are most effective in changing health, educational and nutritional outcomes for the better in the developing world. Banerjee and Duflo write for a popular audience, but do not enter into debates about whether aid is good or bad or support a particular development technique. Instead, they focus on the types of interventions that improve the lives of poor people, as proven in randomized controlled trials.

The book is divided into two parts: the first on private lives and the second on institutions. In the part on private lives there are chapters on hunger, health, education, and birth control. In the second part of the book the chapters address issues such as insurance, banking, microfinance and business development. There is much to be learned in each of these sections from the method of randomized controlled trials. For example, in the area of food consumption, they found that in India poor people do not seem to want to spend more money on food. If they get more money, they are more likely to spend it on entertainment or tastier food, rather than more food. This is in spite of the fact that many of India's poor do not receive the necessary micronutrients they need for a healthy life. Banerjee and Duflo note the need for a serious rethinking of food policies to address the actual needs and preferences of the poor. They don't need more food, but better nutrition. Better nutrition is particularly important for pregnant mothers and children under 2 years old as good nutrition at an early age can have a lasting impact on earning and educational potential. More food for everyone may not be the answer, but better nutrition for some certainly is.

Some of the most interesting parts of the book are those where the authors run up against actions taken by poor people that they find inexplicable using standard models of rational behavior. Rather than arguing that poor

people are irrational, they step back and look more closely at what is happening in each case. The answers are not always predictable. For example, they examine the difficulty of getting poor children fully immunized in parts of India. Immunizations are free, so that is not the problem. They then tried a variety of incentives to make it profitable for families to fully immunize their children, such as giving away a set of plates or some food when the immunizations are given or a set is fully completed. Banerjee and Duflo argue that these sorts of ‘nudges’ are needed because parents are not fully convinced that immunizations are the best way to have healthy children. Without a state that enforces immunizations, for example by requiring them when children go to school, positive incentives are needed to get many poor families to complete the full set of childhood immunizations.

The authors make the point that small tweaks to the way services are delivered make big differences in effectiveness. For example, in Kenya, when farmers were offered half-price fertilizer during planting season, few took advantage of the offer because they didn’t have the cash reserves to afford the fertilizer even at a discounted rate. However, when they were given the opportunity to buy a full-cost voucher for fertilizer use, just after the harvest when they had cash, many took advantage of the opportunity and redeemed the voucher the next planting season. The issue in this case was the timing of the assistance that was being given to farmers. When it changed, there was a 50% increase in the use of fertilizer, despite the fact that it was not offered at a discounted rate. Many of the examples running through the book come from Africa, but those from other areas of the developing world are equally instructive.

As noted earlier, one of the benefits of their approach is that it is somewhat stripped of the heat and fire that are often apparent in the development literature. In their chapter on microfinance they note that it is a fine financial product for the poor and a very good thing, but it does not radically transform people’s lives. Banerjee and Duflo express some frustration that serious attempts to evaluate microfinance programs are often ignored or countered by anecdotes. They caution that “Trapped by decades of overpromising, many of the leading players in the microfinance world have apparently decided they would rather rely on the power of denial than take stock, regroup, and admit that microfinance is only one of the possible arrows in the fight against poverty” (172). In a more positive vein, they also note that one substantial benefit of the whole microfinance movement has been to prove that it is possible to lend to the poor.

The authors conclude that there are many things that we do not know about how to effectively alleviate poverty. Yet, we do know a number of useful things about poor people, which should go some way towards better policy development. 1) The poor often lack critical information and believe things that are not true. Therefore they do not necessarily make the choices that will

benefit them the most. 2) The lives of the poor are extremely complex and poor people bear responsibility for too many aspects of their lives. They face high risks with no insurance and have to make many more decisions in a day than wealthier people for whom the decisions are already made. For example, poor people have to decide if, how and for which family members they will purify their water, while wealthier people typically have access to clean water. 3) Some markets, such as health insurance, are missing for the poor because they cannot be sustained. 4) Countries are not doomed to failure because they are poor. 5) Expectations about what people are able or unable to do turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. Politicians commit fraud because no one expects them to be honest, nurses don't show up for work because no one expects them to do so.

If Christians are interested in improving the lives of the poor, information provision and insurance seem to be critical areas of need that are not being met at the moment. Christians involved in health and development activities can take away the practical lessons learned, but there is more here for those working in church-related activities. The conclusions that Banerjee and Duflo reach about the lives of the poor have ramifications far beyond economic development alone. They would suggest that we need to ask different questions about how to best reach and serve poor people. For example, what sorts of incentives are most appropriate in outreach work? What are the discipleship and religious education activities most necessary for people who are very stressed? The decisions that poor people make in privileging entertainment may also explain why so many churches are full and why religious practice thrives among the socioeconomically less-privileged.

Another area in which the church has a comparative advantage is in addressing the issue of expectations. Honesty and responsibility are issues of Christian character that we seek from those within the church, and the emphasis on developing Christian character is important for every church, everywhere. There is a role that the church can play in building expectations of honesty and responsibility from leaders and government workers. Several years ago in Kenya, Christians for a Just Society ran a campaign with posters and buttons that said, "I will not give a bribe; I will not take a bribe." In a society in which bribery is common, the public and visible statement of a position like this has an impact. It makes clear that there is a Christian way to act, and that is to avoid bribery. The conclusions from *Poor Economics* would suggest to us that these sorts of campaigns, to the extent that they are able to change expectations of politicians and government workers, will improve the lives of the poor.

There is something additional to appreciate about this book, it is fundamentally sympathetic to those in poverty, while not endorsing the decisions they make. Banerjee and Duflo manage to bring the reader to an understanding of why a family might scrimp and save to buy a television set,

or throw a massive family wedding, while the children do not receive adequate nutrition. It is a wonderful example of good social science that is informative regarding why people make the decisions that they do, while at the same time providing suggestions about the things that might change their behavior in ways to make their lives better.

Readers will appreciate the respectful view of the poor as complete persons who make a variety of decisions, some wise and some not so wise. Readers will also be encouraged by the fact that providing certain 'nudges' does lead to improvements in health, nutrition, agricultural productivity and other areas. While this is an academic book, and not one that would be appreciated by every church member, it is necessary reading for those involved in development activities and would be interesting to those engaged in active ministry to the poor.

Norman N. Miller

Encounters with Witchcraft: Field Notes from Africa

New York: SUNY and African-Caribbean Institute, Hanover, NH
and Nairobi, Kenya. 2012.

ISBN 978-1-4384-4358-4. glossy pb. 232 pages.

1500 Ksh at ACTS Kenya.

Amazon.com \$24.95. Amazon.com Kindle Edition, \$13.72.

Reviewed by Andrew Wildsmith, Scott Christian University

Norman N. Miller is one of America's early African specialists, living in East Africa intermittently for 40 years since 1960. He came first as a hitchhiker, but later worked as a journalist, university teacher, researcher, documentary filmmaker, and as an advisor to African governments and United Nations agencies. His experience includes extended periods of time in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and visits to Congo, 16 years altogether spread over 26 trips to Africa. He holds a PhD from Indiana University in political science and African studies and a certificate in Swahili from UCLA. He has taught part-time at Dartmouth College since 1980.

This book is not a study of theology and witchcraft nor is it simply an anthropological treatise on witchcraft in Africa. It is a personal narrative that stretches over at least four countries in eastern African and across 40 years, beginning in 1960 in Kenya. The focus is on the author's struggle to understand the phenomena of witchcraft, its persistence in modern Africa, where it started and where it thrives, why witchcraft-based violence finds a ready home amongst families, and how witchcraft functions within a society.

Although the focus of this book is on witchcraft, the author's life in Africa is the setting for his growing understanding of the issue. The reader shares Miller's journey of discovery from the day in 1960 that he stepped off the ship in Mombasa in Kenya Colony and was confronted by a newspaper with the headline "European Geologist Attacked in Gogoland: Witchcraft Suspected". This led him to begin learning about witchcraft and it remained an important interest during all his journeys to Africa. After hitch-hiking around colonial eastern Africa in 1960, Miller returned to the US where he did graduate studies in African politics and anthropology as well as learning Swahili. In 1964 he obtained a two-year study grant for a PhD thesis focusing on the grass-roots political and economic changes in Kenya and Tanzania after independence. While conducting his research in a rural Tanzanian village, he met Mohammadi Lupanda, a poor widow accused of being a witch after a baby girl died. She was found guilty and banished. Her fate seemed to haunt Miller and her name reappears periodically in the book. When Miller returned to the same village in 2004, he discovered that it was Mohammadi's own family who

secretly agreed with her exile because they were afraid the accusations against her would spill over onto them.

In the book's prologue, Miller summarizes his first lessons on witchcraft in a library in Mombasa, especially how deep-rooted and widespread it is.

He also spoke with Peter Lavers, a retired headmaster of St. Andrew's, Turi, Kenya, then a Christian primary school, who passionately loathed witchcraft as much as Africans and who was also in favour of colonialism as a tool to save Africans from ignorance, disease and witchcraft. This focus on the human, secular and social aspects of witchcraft pervades the book from beginning to end even as Miller gains a deeper understanding of it over the decades. His negative attitude towards most (not all) Christians and their various views of witchcraft also surfaces in different places in the book.

In 1960 Miller's informal interviews yielded information from a white museum curator who defined witchcraft terms for him; from an African caretaker who guarded ancient rock paintings; from a British Acting District Commissioner who didn't like proselytizing missionaries but did discuss witchcraft and the colonial laws and the activities of AICs as witch-hunters; from people in Nairobi who told him about Mau Mau connections with witchcraft power; from a traditional healer in Uganda who provided witchcraft protection charms; from a Scottish doctor who was only too familiar with witchcraft as an explanation for disease and death; from Belgian Jean Pierre Hallet in the Congo who had close contact with Batwa Pygmies who only believed in witchcraft when they visited Bantu tribes (Hallet: "*Even the idea of poison does funny things to people who believe in witchcraft.*"); from a Dutch hunter and crocodile hide merchant who described how certain powdered roots mixed with crocodile bile yields a poison used to kill someone whose death is blamed on witchcraft; and from Muslim and Christian border guards who also believed in witchcraft power. At this point in 1960 Miller was merely dabbling in witchcraft research compared to his next encounters with witchcraft while doing his PhD thesis field research from 1964 to 1966.

Miller's description of his two years "Living with Witches" (the title of chapter two) focuses on two witchcraft cases - those of Mohammadi Lupanda (see above) and of Welelo Mkombe, the youngest wife of an old chief who she admitted killing by "poisoning". Although Miller's interviews and his research into the court records in Mkombe's trial told him most of what had happened in both cases, he was left with questions. This is despite the fact that all the most important informants were Africans and more or less closely involved with the cases mentioned.

By concentrating on interviews with a European museum curator and knowledgeable Africans who uncovered the meanings behind the physical objects used in or associated with witchcraft and the art depicting witches, Miller discovered some of the inner workings and meanings behind the events

he had witnessed. This is the subject of chapter three, "Through African Eyes: The Arts". Objects relating to witchcraft practice are symbols of witchcraft power, and can be either defensive (for protection against witchcraft attack) or offensive (used to attack people) depending on the nature of the practitioners, whether they are good or evil. Aside from poisons and actual weapons used in killing, the belief in the power of witchcraft, the fear inspired by the masks, powders, charms etc, etc, is where the power comes from.

Miller investigates witch-hunters and witch-cleansers in 1969 and finds a great deal of fraud, extortion and fear involved in their methods. From his research in 1971-1978 Miller learns about witchcraft as a political tool, the role secret societies play in witchcraft, that pastoralists don't have witchcraft beliefs and problems while agriculturalists do, and also learns about witchcraft as scapegoating. In Chapter 6 "The Spirit Wars", which cover his research from 1980 to 1986, Miller learns about "Christian witchcraft", that is, how various AICs combat, cleanse, and convert witches – and how some of the "born again" and charismatic sects defraud people. He pursues the differences between the evil eye amongst the pastoralist Borana in northern Kenya and witchcraft amongst settled agriculturalists. His extended discussion with a new American missionary who knew next to nothing about witchcraft reveals why Miller believes witchcraft beliefs persist alongside Christian beliefs – both postulate a supernatural worldview that depends on good and evil spirit beings. His view of missionaries, "*As long as you teach [not preach or convert] and bring relief to the poor, I'm pro-missionary. It's when you start forcing a particular rigid doctrine on Africans, that we part ways.*" (p. 147)

In the rest of the book Miller studies the economics of witchcraft and its link to poverty and natural disasters, its role in politics as an alternate form of "government", its use by political parties and rebel movements (including Mungiki and the Lord's Resistance Army), and how it functions as a process of dealing with some form of misfortune. Witchcraft beliefs persist when young children learn of them informally from older generations so that it becomes part of their reality, their worldview. In addition, witchcraft accusations result from fear of social disintegration brought on by natural disasters and war. Harmony is restored by accusing and eliminating witches, and family members who fear being implicated offer up older women (and men) like Mohammadi Lupanda, who are already on society's margins for some reason.

Miller's book is a useful background guide to witchcraft's social foundations and manifestations. His dim view of most missionaries and his thoroughly secular point of view challenge African Christians and Western missionaries in different ways, whether we agree with him or not. The book's narrative style makes for enjoyable reading. Its many photos, maps and drawings, and the index and bibliography add to its usefulness. The book is recommended for anyone interested in learning more about the topic and is a useful but not essential addition to theological libraries.



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Jørgen Skov Sørensen

***Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies:
Language and Power in Contemporary Mission Theory***

Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007, viii + 282 pp., \$ 88.95 paper.

Reviewed by Robert P. French II
PhD student at Eastern University

Both in the academy and in local churches within ‘Western’ societies, there is substantial recognition of an identifiable shift that has been and is occurring in Western thought – namely, the shift from modernity to postmodernity. Despite this recognition, there is little agreement concerning how to define and identify postmodernity. This discord becomes apparent when Christian theology, especially mission theology, attempts to interact with postmodernity. It is precisely this interaction, or lack thereof, between postmodern theory and mission theology that Jørgen Skov Sørensen examines in his book, *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies*.

Missiological Mutilations is a slightly revised version of Sørensen’s 2005 thesis from the University of Birmingham. Chapter one introduces Sørensen’s hypothesis that the power structures of a modern epistemological paradigm have naturalized language in mission theory. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used to promote the use of postcolonial criticism and critical linguistics as ‘the major deconstructive tools of the study’ (29), which is discussed in chapter two. Chapter three serves to define, compare, and contrast modernity and postmodernity, with special attention to epistemology. Building upon this comparison, chapter four employs CDA to deconstruct three well-known missiologists – Hiebert, Kirk, and Bosch. Through the examination of terminology, implicature, and perspective, Sørensen concludes that all three ‘work theologically within a modern epistemological paradigm’ (203). Chapter five identifies characteristics of a postmodern epistemological paradigm, which reinforces Sørensen’s construction of a postmodern approach to mission based upon the work of three theologians – Hodgson, Placher, and Russell. Chapter six concludes his ‘thought experiment,’ which demonstrates that ‘naturalized mission theoretical language plays a decisive role in both shaping and maintaining the modern mission mind-set’ (251). Sørensen contends that it is only once we revise our mission theory within a critical, postmodern, framework that ‘a reinvented mission theory will find its space’ (258).

Sørensen’s well researched ‘thought experiment,’ demonstrates an impressively wide incorporation of interdisciplinary scholarship. In his interaction with a wide array of sources, Sørensen carefully attends to a variety of terms that can prove problematic. Similarly, Sørensen identifies the difficulty and irony in employing a postmodern theoretical approach in a Western context, and notes that ‘the fundamental scientific method and *raison*

d'être of the study is thoroughly modern and firmly part of a western scientific and academically modern tradition' (9-10, footnote 22). Such care and critical self-reflection demonstrates well the concerns and attention that a postcolonial critique requires. While Sørensen's attempt to engage mission theory through a postmodern lens is indeed commendable, the most noteworthy contribution of this study is the framework for understanding the transition from modernity to postmodernity as an epistemological shift. However, this framework is not Sørensen's main objective, but rather the *a priori* assumption that provides the foundation for his study (6).

Sørensen is right to note that postmodernity is hard to define and that the concept of postmodernity has caused some consternation in Western theology. Sørensen well encapsulates philosophical and cultural trends by defining postmodernity, at least in part, by its reaction to modernity. In this way, postmodern characteristics are identifiable by their opposition to and change from modernity. Unfortunately, modernity is not given a similar treatment.

A modern epistemological paradigm identifies knowledge as truth, and because this truth can be objectively observed, repeated, and rationally understood it is applicable to all people regardless of language, culture, or context. Postmodernity instead stresses the finite nature of human beings and is therefore strongly skeptical of human beings' ability to know truth and even more suspicious of universal truth claims. Although the study does not explicitly identify these characteristics, it is possible that universal truth claims are attributed to the epistemology of modernity for these reasons. However, universal truth claims, as exemplified by the history of the Christian tradition, did not originate from nor are they based upon a modern epistemology. Yet this understanding can be observed as significantly, and potentially errantly, shaping the study's use of CDA.

Therefore, since modernity is not defined by the epistemology that preceded it, universal truth claims become a fallacious characteristic of the modern epistemological paradigm. In this regard, Hiebert, Kirk, and Bosch are misrepresented. Sørensen critiques Hiebert's use of 'the international hermeneutical community, in which Christians and theologians from different lands check one another's cultural biases' (155) as demonstrative of naturalized language indicative of a modern epistemological paradigm. Sørensen observes that although Hiebert proscribes treating 'the other' as inferior, Hiebert utilizes language that dichotomizes Christians from non-Christians and suggests that Christian history and theology can be helpful tools in the hermeneutical process. Sørensen identifies this language as indicative of a modern epistemological paradigm, but it would appear from Hiebert's text that the foundation for using such language precedes modernity and can be observed throughout Christian history. Similar examples form the bulk of the study's criticism. Even more, the three texts exemplifying a

postmodern epistemology of mission theory also appear to be inadequately represented.

Sørensen utilizes texts from Hodgson, Placher, and Russell to construct a postmodern mission approach. It is an intriguing comparison as none of the texts are specifically written to formulate or contribute to mission theory. In addition, whereas Sørensen examined the texts of Hiebert, Kirk, and Bosch as a whole, Hodgson's, Placher's, and Russell's texts are mined for information that support and contribute to Sørensen's postmodern approach. This is well reflected by the attention provided to the modern mission texts (74 pages) and the postmodern texts (37 pages). While one text from each scholar is used to examine the mission theories of Hiebert, Kirk, and Bosch, multiple texts written by Hodgson, Placher, and Russell are used in Sørensen's attempt to construct a postmodern approach to mission theory. Compounding this difference, the methodology utilized to evaluate the modern mission texts – CDA – was not applied to the postmodern texts. In trying to understand the differing treatments, the criticisms levied upon the modern mission texts, and the characteristics associated with a modern epistemological paradigm, the summary of the fifth chapter reveals the presupposition informing the applied analysis and methodology, viz. 'the Christian tradition was submitted to the condition of postmodernity rather than postmodernity to the Christian tradition' (247).

This presupposition will likely be viewed as problematic for Christians from a variety of perspectives. It would seem this informed Sørensen's analysis of the modern mission texts and the association of universal truth claims with modernity. Further, the exclusive priority given to postmodernity by Sørensen identifies several other aspects of the study that warrant discussion.

Certainly, one is inclined to question if a postmodern thought experiment concerned with theories of Christian mission should limit itself to one cultural perspective. As Sørensen himself notes, central to the epistemology of postmodernity is the recognition and importance placed upon the plurality of beliefs, ideas, people, and communities throughout the globe. Therefore, if mission theory is to be examined from a Western perspective, one could question if representation from multiple Western perspectives – such as Anabaptist, Pentecostal, etc. – and non-Western influences upon modern mission theory in the West would not be more advantageous to a postmodern approach? Sørensen assumes that only Western mission theories can reflect the modern mission movement, but is one Western perspective realistically identifiable? In addition, the Western mission movement and Western Christianity are presented as a homogenous group, once again raising the question if it is possible to define Christianity in the West as homogenous. Sørensen does not address these questions.

In addition, the present study's formatting can be tedious. Specifically, the list of contents appears to have been altered little from its original form. Although comprehensive, the list is difficult to navigate and lacks clear and easy identifications to assist the reader in differentiating chapters from topics. This format muddies a cursory view of the study's argument and flow, and inhibits the reader from quickly locating chapters or topics. Nevertheless, it is a well-written work that includes excellent transitions and provides signposts to the reader that helps keep the entire text in perspective.

The current work is a useful contribution to academic discussions concerning Western mission theory. However, because of the heavy-laden jargon, postcolonial criticism, and many other aspects of ideological language and theory, this book will likely limit itself to academics interested in Western attempts at postcolonial criticism, postmodernity, or Christian theology. Solidifying this reality is the cost of the book, which likely limits Sørensen's audience to scholars and those with access to academic libraries. In conclusion, Sørensen should be commended for his attempt to engage mission theory through a postmodern paradigm with epistemology as the foundation, however, for the aforementioned reasons, the validity of his suggestions and methods may be viewed by many theologians and mission-minded people as contentious.

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