

ECCLESIASTICAL PILLARS OFTEN IGNORED TODAY

Francis C. P. Keiru

Mth - Daystar University, Nairobi, BA (Hons)

Diped - Makerere University, Kampala

Certificate - Teacher Education (S₁), Kenyatta
University, Nairobi

Certificate - Project Development and Management,
Kenya School of Government, Nairobi

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**Unity of purpose in Christ for Evangelism and Discipleship
(of glossary)**



Let us work Together



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FOREWORD

Francis Chege Keiru in this book entitled “Ecclesiastical Pillars often Ignored Today” is a well-researched book reflects upon the book of John 17:1-26. The prayer of Jesus for all the believers of the world bringing about the unity aligned with the purpose of God. The writer brings the idea of ecumenism which is paralleled in a similar manner where Paul in the scripture talks about the Church as a body with many parts that synchronize together for the benefit of the whole body (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27). We are one body in Christ and we all joined together to each other but different parts of the same body. The call for the ecclesiastical body has one mandate from Christ, the owner of the universal church: to preach Christ and to make Him known to all nations of the world in order to reconcile all people to God through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The book is theologically oriented and it is a resourceful book which is a must-read by all churches such as African Initiated Churches Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Mainstream churches as well as those in theological institutions. May God use this book to encourage many who find themselves separated from the unity aligned to the purpose of God in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Joseph Moilo, PhD

Former Lecturer JKUAT, PUEA

Currently Presiding Bishop of Bethel church and Secretary
General

The Kenya National Congress of Pentecostal Churches

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my wife Felicta Wangeci, my youngest grandchild; Kaya Wangeci Keiru and the following four pioneer *mission* elders of PCEA St. Andrews Parish; Solomon Gacheche and Gerald Mukuha Wagana in mission work in Mashuru Subcounty in the county of Kajiado. The late deacon Joseph Munene Wagura was always behind their trails. The late Joseph Munuhe Mukundi was instrumental in securing land for the opening of the Northern Corridor for P.C.E.A *Nendeni* area in consult with Laikipia Presbytery. Thanks for the St. Andrews youth who on a weekend built “*a mabati*” temporary church at *maũndũ nĩ merĩ* in the area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I recognize the hand of God who inspired the writing of this book. I pay tribute to my undergraduate teacher, the late Professor John Mbiti who inspired me to take a course in African traditional religious and African Christian theology as majors. This facilitated studies of the same for graduate studies three decades later.

I am very grateful to daystar university, where thoughts that you can be truly Christian without being stripped of indigenous vestments that form the bedrock of Christian living as perfected by Jesus Christ. I am grateful to Dr. Moilo Joseph, who through the eyes of a medical parasitologist sees no parasites that can shake the church's foundation whose Christ is the Lord. Thanks to Claude Mwangemi who dutifully typed the manuscript despite his busy schedule at his Jackland Homes Property Management Firm.

PREFACE

John 17:1-26 is referred to as the High Priestly Prayer. Jesus prays that His disciples (apostles and all other followers) will be with Him in heaven. He prays for all believers that, though they are in the world, they may not be of the world. He intercedes that they may be in glorious unity, just as the Trinity, Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, are one (Living Bible Translation). That they may be perfect in one (King James/New International Version) and that they be perfectly one (Revised Standard Version). Indeed, the disciples and early Christians, from approximately 33 CE to 400 CE, triumphed and suffered together as they preached the crucified and risen Lord.

The prayer for unity sets high standards—no less than the unity between God and Jesus. This unity is not necessarily physical but is, in essence, aligned with God's purpose in Christ. This prayer inspires ecumenical thought, as the true picture of the Church is a tapestry of many denominations, both traditional and modern. Most notably, the early divisions included the Roman (Western) Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Western Church later gave birth to Protestantism, with various branches such as the Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist traditions. The Roman Catholic Church also has internal congregations, including the Holy Ghost Fathers, Consolatas, Sisters of Mercy, and the Sims, based in India.¹

¹ New Bible commentary, consulting editors D.A Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer and G.J. Wercham, IVP, Nottingham, England) page 10

Thus, the unity sought in ecumenism cannot be merely physical but must be doctrinal, grounded in humanity's redemption from sin and decay caused by the evil one. Through the ecumenical movement, Christians of different denominations come together to share their faith, discuss theological issues, and collaborate on common goals. African Christians must recognize that more and more denominations, often with attractive names, are emerging in vast numbers—hundreds, if not thousands. This is particularly evident in the rise of the prosperity gospel, where wealth and health ideals are elevated. Where are we failing as Christian believers?

The following pillars or strands that support or interweave the high priestly prayer on unity, oneness, togetherness, in the author's view are as follows:

- i. Bible literacy: All believers, including pastors and priests, should read the Bible in its full context. Whether a parable, a miracle, or general information, a literal interpretation is not enough. Chapter One addresses this in detail.
- ii. Scriptural exegesis: Theological institutions should provide full exegesis of Scripture to curb the growing trend of preachers who attract listeners with affirmations such as, "The Bible says this or that," often leading to solicitations for "sadaka" (offerings) after brief sermons. There is more to biblical text than meets the eye!
- iii. Ecumenical spirit: Mainstream churches must recognize that spiritual values enrich biblical spirituality within the African Church context. Chapter Three explores this further.
- iv. Missiological insights: African-Initiated Churches offer valuable perspectives on the propagation of the

gospel and salvation in Jesus Christ within the African context.

- v. Recognition of the African diaspora: African Christians living in Europe and the U.S. need acknowledgment from their "mother" churches. Many struggle to adapt to Christian expressions in host countries. As Christianity flourishes in the Global South, the re-exportation of this faith to the North and the Western Hemisphere must be examined. Chapter Five discusses this in detail.
- vi. Living out Christ's prayer for unity: It is essential to reflect on how to align with the unity Christ prayed for in the salvific episode, as announced in the fullness of time (Mark 1:15; Luke 2:34-37).
- vii. African Church Interpretation of the Bible: Appropriate interpretative methods for African churches should be established.
- viii. Revamping theology approaches: A type-theology approach should be re-evaluated and improved.

An alternative to the pillar analogy is the role that vitamins and minerals play in the human body. The Church is the Body of Christ, for whom He died, and He is its Head (1 Corinthians 12:27). The eight pillars—and many others not listed—can be viewed as the "vitamins" of the Church. Key vitamins such as A, C, D (the sunshine vitamin), and K, along with B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, biotin, B6, B12, and folate), Omega-3 fish oil, and essential minerals like iron, zinc, calcium, and magnesium are crucial to human health. However, since they function ubiquitously, the pillar imagery remains more effective than venturing into medical science. Our minds are more familiar with pillars, which support bridges and buildings, reinforcing the idea of a strong and united Church.

INTRODUCTION

The Church of Christ, whose birthday—though not expressly stated—was at Pentecost, had been planted and incubated during Christ’s three-year ministry. When the Holy Spirit descended upon believers at Pentecost, the Church became God-active in the world. Christ had promised that He must return to the Father and would not leave the disciples as orphans. However, the Pentecost experience was a stupendous moment.

For the past two thousand years, the Church has gone through both good and bad times, humanly speaking. Most of the apostles were martyred through cruel deaths. One of them, John, the one Jesus loved, survived persecution and lived to the ripe age of about 90 years. From him, we have a glimpse of Heaven—the place the Lord promised He was going to prepare for us. Here is a vivid description of it in Revelation 21:15-22:

The building of the wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst... And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

These jewels simply denote purity and indivisibility. No one can fully fathom the mind of God. Verse 23 (Living Translation) states:

And the city has no need of the sun or the moon to light it, for the glory of God and the Lamb will illuminate it...

It is humanly difficult to comprehend what Heaven looks like or will look like. What we can observe is that Heaven is not just an idea—it is a place. The historical Jesus promised that He was going to prepare a place (mansions) so that, at the end of the age, the redeemed of the Lord will dwell there for eternity, praising God. There will be no death, no sorrow, but rather angelic choral praises in the New Heaven and New Earth.

How does humanity reach this heavenly dwelling? The Great Commission, as enshrined in Matthew 28:16-20, provides the roadmap through the assignment given to the universal Church. The agents of this herculean task are believers themselves as they bring their neighbors along during this wonderful pilgrimage. These agents are diverse—Roman Catholics, followers of Reformed theology such as Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, Evangelicals of all shades, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Coptic Church. The myriad Christian ministries that exist in an effort to revive the Church, including genuine televangelists, will join hands with mainline churches. As the Lord of the harvest says, “*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*” (Matthew 9:35-38).

In this task, both mainline churches and African-Initiated Churches should strive to understand each other in order to proclaim the Gospel effectively. Members of mission-established churches tend to belong to the high-culture segment of society. Missionaries built churches and hospitals as part of their establishments. However, these churches, by and large, are not able to reach the population in the popular culture—those in remote rural areas and slum areas in urban settings.

African-Initiated Churches and ministries bridge this gap. Their contribution to evangelism ought to be acknowledged by mainline churches. That is why their spiritual value is highlighted in Chapter 3.

Other ecclesiastical strands that require special attention for the sound propagation of the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ include:

- i. Reading the Bible for its full value to facilitate sound teaching.
- ii. Teaching the art of full exegesis of Scripture in Bible schools.
- iii. Recognizing the missiological exploits of African-Initiated Churches, as they have valuable lessons for mainline churches to emulate. These churches embrace people from the popular culture. Otherwise, if left solely to mainline churches, many people would remain virtually unchurched.

The role of African Christian Churches in the Diaspora is another key aspect that strengthens the fabric of missiology. Born out of self-actualization and a desire to delink from mission-established churches, these churches have made a significant impact in Europe and America. The warmth found in African communalism allows Africans to feel at home in these distant lands. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who remain abroad after their studies should not be abandoned by their churches in Kenya. Close links with the “mother” church will empower them to preach the Gospel of the Risen Lord. The secularism in those lands, especially in Europe, is disturbing. It is disheartening for an African Christian to see decaying church buildings with virtually no attendees on Sundays.

Another vital component of the Christian tapestry is the ecumenical movement, which seeks to realize the High Priestly

prayer in John 17—that all believers may be united. At the very least, unity should be evident in a triune grasp of common faith, love, and hope. The apparent schism between mainline churches and Evangelicals should be bridged by all means. We are saved by faith alone. This gives us hope in the redemptive work of the cross of Calvary. Biblical hope does not disappoint. In the end, love is not just perceptible in one's life and spirit—it is loudly heard and seen in practical living among other people. The Word of God commands us to love others as we love ourselves. Christ loved us so much that He died on the cross to redeem us from sin, death, and condemnation. Because God is love, He is the creator of love.

A life in Christ becomes the vital force that compels us to love others. This is clearly visible among Christians in their prayer-cell groups and fellowships. The result is that a person filled with love has a strong inclination to love others, which is manifested in selflessness. For example, in courtship, "True love waits" is a maxim used by marriage counselors. In general, sacrificial love should be evident in how we give our time, money, and other resources to meet the needs of others. As 1 John 3 teaches, love is best demonstrated through action.

CHAPTER 1

Reading the Bible for its Full Value

The Bible is a sacred thicket of information. It was written through God's intervention by divine inspirational channels. He used people—real persons. For example, the Pentateuch is said to have been authored by Moses. Some Psalms can easily reveal the author as David, while others have unknown authors. However, in this vast, immeasurable, everlasting love, the Bible (the Biblioteka—Russian for "library")—a library of sixty books, or the sixty-six plus the deuterocanonical books (the Apocrypha)—continues to guide Christianity worldwide. Its teachings influence sociopolitical, religious thoughts, and life in general. Beginning from the Middle East and North Africa, through Rome, and into Central and Western Europe, human civilization has continued to thrive. Christian influence across the Atlantic to North and South America shaped the lives of both immigrants and indigenous peoples. Today, it is generally accepted that the church is moving southward from its initial stronghold in the North.

It is therefore vital to evaluate how the message of the Bible is transmitted, ensuring there is no mix-up due to the proliferation of new Christian movements championed by numerous figures: prophets, apostles, and couples (husband-wife ministries). Whatever the case, Biblical Hermeneutics and exegesis must play a central role in spreading the gospel in obedience to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10).

Biblical hermeneutics is a field of study concerned with how we interpret the Bible. It is a broad area that focuses on the principles, philosophy, and science of interpretation. Hermeneutics is broader than exegesis because it addresses why we interpret a passage and how we should approach the task before moving into exegesis and interpretation. Exegesis, on the other hand, is the interpretation of a text. It seeks to clarify its meaning by exploring its origin and intended significance. A careful, systematic approach is essential in this process. Exegesis aims to understand how the original audience would have interpreted the text. Therefore, a good translation of the Bible is essential, and a reliable Bible dictionary and solid commentaries are crucial tools in this process. Once the word is understood in its ancient context, its application for today becomes a more healthy and meaningful endeavor.

In African Christianity, whether one is a bishop, church minister, pastor, Bible study leader (such as in Bible Study Fellowship), or even a street preacher or evangelist, beware! One is called upon to be knowledgeable in the Word of God. The Word is the Sword of the Spirit. Just like a sword or even a kitchen knife must be sharpened to be effective, so too must one sharpen their understanding of Scripture.

A contemporary book by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*, is an excellent resource for the preachers mentioned above. As Christians, we all have the capacity to discover what the message meant to the initial hearers and then apply it to ourselves today. This, in essence, calls us all—whether in mainline churches, African Initiated Churches, or new religious movements and church ministries bearing the imprint of a biblical verse or theological notion—to dig deep and preach the Word in humility, without self-interest, as is evident in the prosperity gospel.

In the next chapter, a full exegesis of the Book of Jude will serve as an example of what is expected of church ministers and preachers today. It was the author's semester paper on Biblical Hermeneutics. As you read the exegesis on Jude, let the words from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 refresh your mind, as they come out in different versions, sampled below:

- New King James Version (NKJV): "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction."
- The Living Bible Translation (LBT): "Every scripture was given by God and is invaluable to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us to do what is right. It is God's way of making us well-prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone."
- New Living Translation (NLT)–Life Application Study Bible: "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what life is and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work."
- New International Version (NIV): "All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
- New Century Version (NCV): "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing people what is wrong in their lives, for correcting faults, and for teaching how to live right. Using the scriptures, the person who serves God will be capable, having all that is needed to do every good work."

- New American Standard Version (NASV): "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

The key phrase in these versions is: "All Scripture is inspired, is given, is breathed by God." The purpose for which the Bible was availed by God is for doctrine, wherein reproof and correction are encased. It was—and continues to be—a tool to reveal truth and bring us to the realization of what is wrong in our lives. This calls upon every individual to straighten their life by doing what is right, thus preparing each one of us to truly love God and do good to everyone.

Because human beings are created to be relational at all levels, healthy interdependency can be summarized as good neighborliness. This is a critical point when mining information from any part of the Bible, whether it be a parable or an event, such as a healing. In Christ's sayings or apostolic teachings, we need to heed what Philippians 4:8-9 is teaching us. The verse calls for the practical application of our knowledge of Christ, as revealed in the Good News. What the Word of God says should be evident in our actions. The knowledge one gains from quiet time, fellowships, and sermons—rather than mere exposure to the word—should trigger obedience. This verse reminds us that the sin of disobedience led to humanity's fall from God's intended purpose. Repentance and obedience lead to fixing one's mind on what is honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable (by God and man), excellent, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8). The Apostle Paul is challenging us to piously dare to tell our fellow brethren, "Copy us!" While this is a tall order, by the grace of God, it is achievable.

In conclusion, the words of Lee C. Camp will motivate all believers to take Bible reading seriously as the key to

understanding Jesus' call to "take up your cross and follow me."² Through the discipline of seeking to read scripture well, we hope that our vision will not be clouded by a "cataract," which would make us falsely believe that "the end justifies the means." By submitting ourselves to the authority of scripture, historical pitfalls—such as the slave trade, apartheid, racial segregation, and racial superiority—will not be repeated among the people of the world.

Here below are some Bible Versions (Translations)

- New International Version (NIV)
- 21st century King James Version (KJ21) – America
- Holman's Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) 2004
- International Standard Version (ISV) 2004
- Jerusalem Bible (JB) 1966
- New Living Translation (NLT)
- Berean Study Bible
- Berean Literal Bible
- New American Standard Bible 1973
- King James Bible
- Christian Standard Bible
- Contemporary English Version
- Good News translation
- International Standard Version
- NET Bible
- New Heart English Bible
- God's Word Translation
- Jubilee Bible 2000
- King James version 2000 Bible
- American King James Version
- Douay-Rheims Bible
- English Revised Version

² Lee C. Camp, *Mere Discipleship; Biblical Christianity in a rebellious World*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Brazos Press, 2003), 54

- Webster's Bible Translation
- Weymouth New Testament
- World English Bible
- Young's Literal Translation
- Good News Translation Bible 1992
- New Jerusalem Bible 1985
- The message (Msg)

These translations are adopted from *Rick Warren – What on Earth Am I Here For? The Purpose Driven Life* (Expanded Edition), Oasis International Ltd, Wheaton, Illinois, 2002, p. 353. The reason for using various Bible translations is threefold:

1. Linguistic limitations: Every translation has its own linguistic terminology and limitations. Since different languages have nuances and shades of meaning that may be missed in translation, comparing multiple versions helps provide a fuller understanding.
2. Familiarity leading to complacency: When a verse becomes overly familiar, we may unconsciously gloss over its meaning, assuming we already understand it. Seeing the same verse in different translations can offer fresh insight and help us grasp its message in a new context.
3. Verse divisions were added later: The chapter and verse divisions found in modern Bibles were not introduced until 1560 AD. Because of this, quoting a single verse or a portion of it may not always convey the full message. Looking at multiple translations helps to better interpret the intended meaning.

CHAPTER 2

Full Exegesis of the Book of Jude

A full exegesis of the Epistle of Jude is presented as a sample, structured as illustrated herein. It begins with the historical background, setting the context in which the letter was written. The form and structure of the epistle are then examined to highlight its literary characteristics and organization. A detailed lexical analysis follows, shedding light on the meanings of key words and phrases. To grasp the epistle's broader significance, its biblical context is considered, connecting Jude's message to the wider narrative of Scripture. The study then delves into the theology of the epistle, exploring its core doctrinal themes. Finally, the exegesis concludes with an examination of the relevance and application of Jude's teachings for contemporary readers. In this chapter, minimal attention will be given to the literal aspects, as the epistle is best understood as a simple letter carrying the profound mission of the incarnate Word—Jesus Christ, the Lord, who existed before all ages, now and forevermore (v. 25).

Historical Aspect

The authorship of Jude is traditionally attributed to Jude, the brother of James. In his introduction, he confidently identifies himself as a servant of Christ. Scholars suggest that this Jude could be one of three figures: Judas, the half-brother of Jesus; Judas, a leader in the early Church in Jerusalem; or

Judas, the apostle.³ This Judas, who was a leader in the Jerusalem Church, was sent to Antioch along with Barnabas (Acts 15:22). It is unlikely that he was Judas the apostle, as verse 17 does not suggest apostolic authorship: "But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold."⁴ The name Jude (or Judas) was common among Jews and early Christians.⁵

Other individuals named Judas include Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37), Judas son of James (Acts 1:13), and Judas of Damascus (Acts 9:11), but certainly not Judas Iscariot. Most commentators identify the author of this epistle as Jude, the brother of James, who is believed to be the Lord's brother. He appears to have been converted after Christ's resurrection and later became a leader in the Jerusalem church (John 7:5, 1 Corinthians 15:7). The authorship of Jude is tentatively dated to the second half of the first century CE, likely after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The reference in verse 17 to apostles in the past suggests a later period.⁶ The Epistle of Jude is categorized among the General Epistles. References to it appear as early as the late second century, including in the Muratorian Canon and other early Christian writings.⁷

Allusions to the Epistle of Jude can be found in early Christian writings such as the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas.⁸ Though the precise date of authorship remains

³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of scriptures by Dallas seminary Faculty, New Testament* (Texas: SP publications, 1983) 917

⁴ *Ibid.*, 917

⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, Ed. *The interpreters Bible*, Vol. XII (Nashville: Abingdon press, 1980), 320

⁶ J.D Douglas, org. ed., *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. (Leicester Eng., Intervarsity press:

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Ibid*

uncertain, most scholars estimate it was written between 67 CE and 80 CE. If this dating is accurate, its journey to full canonical recognition extended well into the second century, making it one of the last books to be included in the New Testament canon. Despite its brevity, the Epistle of Jude was highly regarded, as Origen noted: "While it consists of but a few lines, yet it is full of mighty words of heavenly grace." Based on the estimated dates of authorship, the epistle was written during or after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. With temple worship no longer possible, gatherings shifted to synagogues and household churches. Nero's persecution had left devastating effects, but a period of relative calm followed before the rise of Domitian's persecution (CE 81–96).

The primary purpose of the epistle was to urge true believers to stand firm against false teachers who denied the Lordship and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. These false teachers were the early Gnostics, who were beginning to influence the church. They claimed that salvation came through secret knowledge (gnosis) rather than through Christ. By the late first and early second centuries, Gnosticism had grown into a formidable force, opposing the doctrine of incarnation, as they believed all matter was inherently evil. To them, the idea of resurrection was a fallacy.

Jude wrote this epistle to believers who had embraced salvation in Jesus Christ, encouraging them to remain steadfast in their faith and resist the deceptive teachings of these false teachers, who had infiltrated their gatherings and love feasts.

Form

The form of the Epistle of Jude follows the general literal style, but it also incorporates dynamic elements. Edward C. Pentecost describes the style of Jude as dynamic, noting the

use of various figures of speech that bring the text to life. For example, Jude employs vivid imagery such as shepherds, clouds, trees, waves, and stars (vv. 12-13) to convey his message more powerfully and poignantly. These metaphors serve to illustrate the false teachers and their destructive impact, making the epistle both evocative and memorable.⁹

I agree with Pentecost's interpretation, as any leader would be eager to identify these misfits in the love feasts who are likened to mindless shepherds, dry clouds, and fruitless autumn trees. There is much at stake when it comes to the faith. The imagery of 'Christians' likened to waves, whose foam is described as shame, piques the reader's curiosity. I am not alone in this perspective. The Interpreter's Bible vividly describes the epistle, stating that 'the Epistle of Jude certainly presents more surprising phenomena than any other book of the New Testament. In tone, it is intense, vehement, and denunciatory. In its perspective, it is Judeo-Christian. In structure, it is Aramaic, abounding in triple arrangements.¹⁰ Jude also references uncanonical books, such as 1 Enoch and the Assumption of Moses, which were known during the New Testament era. In particular, these texts attribute the fall of angels to their sin with mortal women, an idea that Jude alludes to in his epistle.¹¹

Structure

The twenty-five verses of the Epistle of Jude are clearly structured to address the issues at hand. The opening verses (1-2) consist of greetings, followed by a call to defend the faith in verses 3-4. A strong warning against apostasy is then given in verses 5-16. Next, the epistle offers the Christian antidote, providing guidelines to help believers remain

⁹ John F. Wavoor, Bible Knowledge commentary, 917

¹⁰ George Arthur Buttrick, The Interpreter's Bible, 320

¹¹ Ibid

steadfast in the faith. The letter concludes with a doxology, widely regarded as one of the most powerful and eloquent ascriptions of praise found not only in Scripture but in all of literature (Jude 24-25). While I may not vouch for this assertion this final commendation and ascription of praise is very impressive.

Biblical context

Jude refers to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ (v.1), a term with deep roots in Scripture. In the Old Testament, particularly in Isaiah (40-66), the typology of Christ as the suffering servant is evident, foreshadowing Jesus' mission to serve humanity through His redemptive work. This theme of servanthood is echoed throughout the New Testament, particularly in Romans, where Christ's redeeming work is highlighted (Romans 3:24, 8:39). In 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, believers are called servants, or "slaves" of Christ, in their commitment to doing good (1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 3:14). True servanthood, however, is only found in Christ, as the Gospel of John teaches, emphasizing that one must remain in Christ like a twig in the vine in order to bear fruit.

Jude's defense of the faith is the primary purpose of his letter (vv. 3-4). In response to the emerging apostates, particularly Christian Gnostics, Jude mounts a spiritual rebuttal against their false teachings. His stance is reminiscent of Paul's declaration in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." This gospel is echoed in Isaiah 61, where the suffering servant binds the brokenhearted, proclaims freedom for the captives, and releases them from darkness. Like Paul and Peter, Jude issues stern warnings to the apostates, referencing past examples of judgment, including the Egyptians (v. 5), angels (v. 6), and Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7). Jude aligns with Paul in condemning sexual perversion and

licentiousness (Jude vv. 5, 15, 18), echoing Paul's condemnation in Romans 1:18-32.

The Gospels contain stories of individuals who, though saved, can fall into sin due to unbelief and be lost forever. The parable of evil spirits returning in multitudes (Matthew 12:44-45, Luke 11:24-26) speaks to this reality. Jude also interacts with Proverbs (Proverbs 25:14), comparing boastful individuals, who claim gifts they do not have, to clouds and wind without rain (cf. Jude v. 16). He further reflects on lessons from fruitless trees in late summer being uprooted (cf. Matthew 13:28-30; John 15:1-10).

Jude's letter, though brief, spans the saving work of Jesus Christ, drawing from the Old Testament (Isaiah) and engaging with the Gospels, Paul's epistles, and 2 Peter, which addresses false teaching in chapter two. Like Peter, Jude emphasizes the deliverance from false teachers (2:1-9), offering examples of historical judgments. Both Jude and Peter warn of the dangers of false teachings, stressing that God has always provided warnings—He warned people before the flood (Genesis 6:1-4), and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were also given warnings (Genesis 19).

Lexical Data

Lexical data involves delving into the meanings of key words, especially those with specific theological significance that may not be immediately obvious. In the Epistle of Jude, the term "servant" stands out as crucial. Jesus is portrayed as the servant of all servants. To be a servant of Christ is to follow the example of the ultimate servant, Jesus, who demonstrated that true greatness is defined by the service you provide to God and others. He washed His disciples' feet, fed the hungry, and cared for the sick. The triad of "mercy, peace, and love" represents gracious qualities that flow from God's nature. God

is love, and His mercy reflects this love (John 3:16). Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is the Immanuel Isaiah prophesied about centuries before His incarnation. This concept of service is reflected in the symbolic use of the towel, which is given to every graduate at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya, as a reminder of the call to serve others. (Appendix 1).

The phrase "slandorous accusations" is another significant term in the Epistle of Jude. The Gnostics, unable to comprehend how the Word could become flesh (due to their belief that all matter was evil), dismissed the concept of the Incarnation as nonsense. This challenge directly attacked the core tenets of the Gospel—namely the Incarnation, Resurrection, Ascension, and the salvation these events provide—denying their profound spiritual significance.

"Rebellion" is another key term, synonymous with apostasy. These individuals had once received God's grace, mercy, and love (v.2), but now they had turned away, choosing rebellion. Rebellion leads to punishment, as demonstrated by the cases of Balaam and those involved in Korah's rebellion. The phrase "most holy faith" is particularly notable in this short epistle. This faith refers to the original apostolic faith, which manifests in holy living. The apostates, or rebels, have abandoned this foundational faith. They are to be avoided, but true believers are still urged to show mercy, even attempting to rescue them from the fire (v. 23). However, in doing so, Christians who have remained steadfast in their faith must be cautious not to be led astray by the apostates' waywardness.

The Theology in Jude

The Apostles' Creed was used by early Christians as a baptismal catechism long before it was officially adopted as a creed. The Nicene Creed (325 CE), with its revised version by

the Council of Chalcedon (451 CE), encapsulates the apostolic faith in a concise form. The apostolic faith (v.3 and v.20) is the foundation for true Christian living. Sound theology is essential for living the good life described in verse 20, where the Holy Spirit enables righteous living. Perseverance is a virtue that every Christian must cultivate, especially as ungodliness, scoffers, and perversion are inevitable among humankind—those for whom Jesus came to redeem through the Incarnation. The doxology in Jude serves as a powerful ascription of praise to God, the guardian of our lives, who will faithfully present believers in glory at the Parousia. This echoes many of Paul's exhortations and is reminiscent of the Aaronic blessings, which continue to be administered to baptismal catechumens throughout Christian history.

Application/Relevance

In defending our faith, it is crucial that we do so peacefully. Throughout Christian history, there have been periods of persecution when people disagreed on theological interpretations. The Inquisition and the Crusades, for example, stand as dark chapters in Jesus' movement. Yet, mercy, peace, and love call for an ecumenical spirit, fostering unity among believers. However, for those who reject the Lord Jesus, they must be shunned in order to prevent their negative influence. Psalm 1:1 warns against sitting with scoffers, and Paul advises believers not to be yoked with unbelievers, as righteousness has no place with wickedness (II Cor. 6:14). There are false teachers—people preaching distorted forms of the Gospel under the guise of denominations, sects, or new religious movements—all in the name of Christ. Often, the motive behind these teachings is financial gain. It is vital for each of us to pray for the spirit of discernment. Where there is a clear

violation of Scripture, we must reject it, but we should always do so with mercy, peace, and love.

State intervention in regulating church activities is not the solution, as human governments are often plagued with injustices such as the misuse of public resources, corruption, and the inability to tackle nepotism and favoritism. High taxes, which escalate the cost of living, often end up in the pockets of government workers, leaving the general populace in poverty. Therefore, there should be a clear separation between church and state.

False teachers can also be intellectuals, such as extreme feminists who have dismissed the Bible for its perceived patriarchal bias and now find spiritual fulfillment in nature. The environment has become their tabernacle, and they engage in spiritual practices in solitude by riverbeds and in forests. The New Age movement and relativism, alongside technological advancements, have pushed Christian faith to the margins of society. Issues like homosexuality and lesbianism have also infiltrated churches and society. These, too, are harmful false teachings that must be rejected in mercy, peace, and love, because the incarnate Lord came to redeem all humans.

In Africa, Christians may behave reverently in church, but the question is whether they exhibit the same attitude toward themselves and others in their daily lives.¹² In Kenya, where 80% of the population is Christian, corruption and selfishness are rampant, as seen in scandals like the Goldenberg affair, the Triton Oil scam, and the maize scandal that led to a national disaster during a time of widespread hunger. The list of societal issues continues with poor infrastructure, manipulated tender processes in the public sector, and the misuse of constituency development funds, where some

¹² *The African Bible*, (Nairobi, Paulines Publications, 1999), 2089

members of parliament divert money for their children's university education with impunity.

Only true faith in Christ can save Africa—and Kenya in particular—from the greed and corruption that perpetuate the marginalization of the poor. The latest fertilizer scandal, along with the drama surrounding the impeachment of the cabinet secretary for agriculture, is just another example of a corrupt society in need of salvation for the welfare of all its citizens. These issues echo the ghosts of past scandals, like the infamous Kenron Fertilizer scandal in the 1980s in Mombasa, which were never fully addressed. The government had to pay for the damage to the last shilling, and the cycle of corruption continues to impact the lives of ordinary citizens.

CHAPTER 3

Spiritual Value Addition by African Initiated Churches

African Initiated Churches (AICs) are a significant part of the broader spectrum of New Religious Movements (NRMs), a phenomenon that has gained visibility especially since World War II. According to Ileine Baker (1989), most of these movements have emerged in their current form during this period. However, in West Africa, AICs began to shape up as early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A prime example of this early movement is the Aladura Church, which was founded in 1925 and officially inaugurated in 1930 in Ogere Rem, Ogun State, Nigeria. The term "Aladura" means "Church of the Lord."

NRMs encompass a wide range of religious movements with varying religious and cultural elements. Despite their diversity, they share a common framework, including ritualistic practices, social structures, and institutional organization. These movements typically adhere to similar doctrines and exhibit ethical rules or moral codes that guide their followers. A key feature of NRMs is their experiential nature, emphasizing personal spiritual encounters. Believers often report transformative experiences, such as meeting Christ, falling into trances, or undergoing healing. These experiences play a central role in the faith and identity of members, contributing to the distinctive character of the movements.

AICs, as part of these broader NRMs, reflect the fusion of African traditions with Christian beliefs, creating unique

expressions of faith that are deeply rooted in local cultural contexts. The emphasis on personal experience and spiritual empowerment in these movements speaks to the broader shift in religious practice within Africa, where individuals seek direct engagement with the divine through rituals, healing, and visionary experiences.

New Religious Movements (NRMs), including African Initiated Churches (AICs), have often been labeled as cults or sects, particularly because of their deviation from mainstream Christian practices. This distinction arises from the ways in which these movements differ in structure, beliefs, and the roles their leaders play in shaping the direction of the group.

A cult is generally defined as a religious group that emerges spontaneously, often founded by a charismatic leader who has had a personal, transformative religious experience. This experience calls for a new beginning or a shift in the way people practice faith. An example is the Moon Movement, which was founded by Reverend Moon in 1954 in Pusan, South Korea. This movement, known for its Holy Spirit-driven teachings and mass weddings, emphasizes unity and a new path of spiritual salvation. Cults tend to be more flexible, allowing members to maintain connections with family and society, but they are often centered around the leader's vision and teachings.

On the other hand, a sect is more rigid, often dominated by the personality of its founder. The leader's personal whims or beliefs essentially become a manual for the followers' lives, and the group's influence can be so strong that it controls the minds of its followers. Sects often isolate individuals from their families and communities, sometimes resulting in severe psychological and emotional abuse, particularly of vulnerable members, such as women. The extreme cases of Pastor Makenzi and the Shakahola deaths in Kenya exemplify the

dangers of such sects. These tragedies illustrate how the isolation, control, and abusive behavior within sects can have dire consequences.

Some groups, like Mungiki, are seen as cults because they did not break away from a mainstream source but instead emerged as a new entity with a distinct belief system. The cult of the living god, for example, draws from local cultural beliefs and reinterprets them within a religious framework, resulting in a syncretic and often controversial practice.

It's important to note that the terms cult and sect carry a negative value judgment and are often used to describe movements that challenge traditional religious norms. In contrast, New Religious Movements (NRMs) are usually considered neutral in value, meaning they are not inherently seen as negative but are observed through the lens of their emergence in response to historical and societal contexts. While some NRMs, like AICs, may deviate from traditional Christian beliefs, the core of their theology often remains rooted in biblical teachings.

As the historical context evolves, these movements might eventually become integrated into the mainstream religious landscape, particularly within African Christianity. As long as they remain biblically grounded, they may continue to influence the Christian faith in Africa, evolving and adapting to the spiritual needs of different communities. However, the term "new" in NRMs often refers more to the unique historical and social circumstances of their formation rather than a complete departure from traditional Christian doctrines.

Thus, understanding NRMs, AICs, cults, and sects requires a nuanced approach, recognizing that while their beliefs and practices may challenge or deviate from mainstream religious traditions, their relationship to Christianity and their role in the wider religious landscape is complex and evolving.

It has often been said that in Africa, we encounter God through joy and celebration. In contrast, many other religious traditions, including Western Christianity, emphasize quieting the mind. This is why practices like meditation and quiet time are so central to our Christian brothers and sisters in the West. In a Western context, it's possible to meditate amidst noise by learning to block it out. One can meditate with their eyes open; silence isn't a requirement. Meditation doesn't necessitate a cocoon of complete quiet—it's about focus and intentionality, even in the midst of life's bustle.

The Akūrinū (Akorino) of Central Kenya is a good example to illustrate the celebratory mode of worship in African Initiated Churches, which has adopted a celebratory style of worship that usually lasts for long hours. This is unlike mission-led churches, where Sunday services rarely exceed 90 minutes. The earliest references to Akūrinū churches are in *Facing Mount Kenya*, an anthropological book written by the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, in 1938. He refers to them as 'watu wa Mungu' (people of God). He also referred to Akūrinū as Arathi (or seers) and prophets (or Aroti, i.e., dreamers). All these labels were self-given by the members. The origin of the church's name comes from the vernacular word mū-kū-ri-nū, meaning "who is the redeemer?" They roar with glottal voices when filled with the Spirit.

As explained above, a sect can sever, and a general term for these churches is the Church of the Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit Church of Zayun, Holy Ghost Church of East Africa, African Holy Ghost Christian Church, God's Word Holy Ghost Christian Church, and African Mission of the Holy Ghost. All these trace their origins to the late 1920s and early 1930s. These were turbulent years for the Kenya Colony, particularly for the Gĩkũyũ (Kikuyu) people. The main causes of the turmoil were land alienation, labor burdens on European settler farms, taxes

(hut taxes), and cultural pressure regarding female circumcision. During these years, there was a rise in anti-missionary, anti-government sentiments among these early Christians.

The religious movement is traced to Joseph Ng'ang'a, who, in 1926, received the baptismal name Joseph in a revelation. After three years of seclusion, prayer, Bible reading, and fasting, he began preaching about the downfall of European rule. In 1929, there was friction between the Agikũyũ and the Church of Scotland Mission (from which the PCEA evolved) due to the prohibition of female circumcision. This led to the rise of independent schooling. Those who believed in detaching their faith from the missionary churches started the Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa, many of which incorporated schools. Today, both the Akūrinũ and African Independent Churches have carved a special niche in African Christianity in Kenya. The independent schools were later handed over to mission-established churches.

In Abaluhya land, there are many such breakaway Christian faiths. In Luo-land, similar breakaways exist, and all have evolved into their own standing within the Christian Church. The religious and socio-economic impact of these churches is well-entrenched in society. In Tanzania, African Initiated Churches are fewer compared to Kenya and Uganda. Most of them are branches of churches founded in Kenya or Malawi. In the Lungwe area of southwestern Tanzania, the Watch Tower (an offshoot of Jehovah's Witnesses), the African National Church, and the Last Church of God have been well-established. The Church of the Holy Ghost has its origins in the influence of the East African Revival, the Ablokole. There are as many as 70 AICs in Tanzania (lecture notes by Dr. Philomena Mwaura).

In Uganda, especially among the Baganda, African Initiated Churches predated those of Kenya. Their emergence was discredited by the foreign rulers. In West Africa, AICs began as early as the end of the 19th century, with the Aladura movement already mentioned. What is new is the rise of New Pentecostalism, as exemplified by the Winners Chapel International, which has a branch in Kenya.

Before moving on to insights into various aspects and the value of African Initiated Churches (AICs) in missiology and the consolidation of Christianity during evangelism, it is important to examine a notorious example of how, in the name of God, the Bible can be misused. As Christianity continues to thrive, the story of Alice Auma (1956-2007) should be read so that in evangelism and the starting of new churches, such pitfalls can be avoided.

Alice, a Catholic better known as Lakwena, was first possessed by “spirits” or angels in 1985. The chief of these spirits was an Italian man who had drowned in the Nile. He was referred to as Lakwena (messenger in Acholi language). Alice and her followers regarded him as a manifestation of the “Holy Spirit” as he spoke to her in 74 different languages (as written by the editors of Encyclopedia Britannica). While leading the cult-like movement, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), her name changed to Alice Lakwena. The followers of the movement regarded her as a Christian.

Alice sought military support for her activities, which she declared were aimed at preventing bloodshed. She wanted to convert her Acholi people in Northern Uganda from violence to god-fearing ways. She was not the first religious leader to be attached to the military after seeking the protection of divine or religious leadership, particularly when only mainline churches and Islam were allowed to operate in Uganda. At 24 years of age, this prophetess and healer was feared throughout the

region. Her soldiers, mainly Acholis comprising young men and boys, were sprinkled with blood and anointed in elaborate initiation rituals full of Christian symbols, such as baptism, Holy Communion, and wearing magic charms. To these traditional rituals, initiates had to abstain from using charms, consulting other healers or mediums, and engaging in ancestral rituals. They were also prohibited from eating pork, consuming alcohol and tobacco, and were required to remain celibate.

In 1987, Alice led her 10,000-strong Holy Spirit Movement 800 kilometers southwards in an attempt to overthrow President Museveni. As they sang hymns, shouting, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again,” she believed that stones thrown at the enemy would explode like grenades, and that nut oil smeared on the followers' bodies would deflect bullets. The soldiers were made to believe that each would have fifteen wives after the victory. Amazing and very sorrowful!

This rebellion was routed, and few of her soldiers fled to Kenya, where they were kept in the refugee camp at Kakuma. The disoriented prophetess lived in Kakuma until her death on January 17, 2007. Alice declared that those who died on both sides were sinners. After her death, Alice’s father Severino Lukoya, Joseph Kony, and other prophets took over the offensive in what was called Lakwena Part II. Lukoya was captured in 1999 having taken leadership of the Christian Church in Uganda, which is nativistic and synergistic. Joseph Kony, who took over the Lord’s Resistance Army, has been hunted all over the DRC, the Central African Republic, and Southern Sudan, but to no avail. He and his followers have committed atrocities of the highest degree. Not even a combined force of Ugandan and American forces has been able to capture him. Today, in 2024–2025, there is speculation that Kony is hiding in Darfur.

Fundamentalism in any religion is dangerous. What may initially appear normal can mutate into unspeakable phenomena. This can lead to sub-issues that distort the religious view. Domsday preachers in our times continue to kill in God's name. As the world approached the year 2000, there was uneasiness that the end was near. We were told that the computers would crash, leading to uncertainty in business and communication technology. On the religious scene, the unthinkable was also happening. The Kanungu massacre in March 2000, in southwestern Uganda, shocked the world when over 530 members of the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God were burnt to death. This movement was a splinter group from the Roman Catholic Church, although the Vatican disassociated itself from it. Joseph Kibwet and Credonia Mwesinde had engaged in obscure activities involving the disappearance of some of its members. The adherents are said to have taken a shortcut to heaven through the inferno.

Nearly two decades later, in Kenya, a bizarre incident occurred within the last two years, involving a learned lawyer and her husband. Their son is said to have been hurled against the wall in the process of exorcising demons from his stomach. Being a former news anchor, the incident shocked many of her followers. She had joined her husband in a movement called the *Finger of God*. The story attracted a lot of media interest both in Australia and in Kenya.

The current strand of Christianity, often referred to as the Prosperity Gospel, can mutate into vanity on the part of the followers as leaders accumulate wealth (money) in the name of God. Some propagators of this gospel present themselves as motivational speakers, keynote speakers, or inspirational speakers. The good news is that the apostles and disciples of Jesus were not materialistic. As Jesus said, "Seek ye first the

Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.” African Christians should be wary of catchy phrases such as "I am a winner" on bumper stickers, "The struggle is over (really?)", "I cannot be down", "This is my year of enlargement, my year of dominion, my year of exploits," and "Jesus is a winner man!" Wealth and health often become the dominant message. The true African Christian should understand that God meets all human needs through Christ's suffering, death, and ascension into glory. Every Christian should share in Christ's victory over sin, sickness, and poverty.

On contentment, the roadmap is clear: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Confession, repentance, and obedience should be the hallmark of Christian living. Whatever resources the worshiper gives as tithes, offerings, and thanksgiving should be used for the furtherance of God's kingdom. These resources should be managed or entrusted to the leadership of the church in a corporate, structured manner to avoid the worship of mammon.

Now, one may wonder, with such gloomy encounters, what valuable insights can African Initiated Churches (AICs) offer to missionary endeavors? Such noble features include intercultural communication of the Gospel and encounters between Christianity and other religions. The next chapter humbly comments on AICs' missiological insights. In this chapter, you will notice that traditional values have been incorporated, as long as they do not contradict the directions as outlined in both the Old and New Testaments when viewed in their entirety. Haselbarth's words summarize this commonly held value: the approach includes an acceptance of what is decent and wise in African religions, philosophy, cultures, and societal norms. However, there is also a clear rejection of what has become outdated or hostile to the way of Christ. We avoid

simple adaptation and conformity but aim for transformation and renewal.¹³

In his book *The Majestic Tapestry*, Webber sees New Christian Religious Movements as typically embodying the church. What is central is not the church as a cultural institution, but the church as the people of the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). This results in an inclusive, ecumenical spirituality and a commitment to the church as an institution. However, the church as the people of God takes precedence over the church as a denomination.¹⁴ For Webber, the picture of many churches and ministries reflects a phenomenon of renewal within the church, where followers share a sense of commitment to each other, much like the scenario in the apostolic church in the early chapters of Luke's narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. This theological proposition is supported in the next chapter on African Initiated Churches' missiological insights.

All in all, African Initiated Churches continue to teach mission-established churches how to mobilize resources for the Great Commission. They must have learned from 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 the art of collecting and giving for the Lord's people. The principle of giving as the Lord has blessed each one is espoused. Generosity is key, along with entrusting persons of integrity, or holy people, with the money. Titus was such a noble steward. Good stewardship of church resources enabled these churches to stand on their own without support from overseas. Notable examples of resource mobilization were well exemplified by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa through

¹³ Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African context*, (Imani House, Nairobi, Uzima press 2008), 28

¹⁴ Robert E. Webber, *The majestic Tapestry*, (Nashville, Camedon, New York, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 666

its Jitegemee (self-reliance) motto. The Anglican Church of Kenya followed suit.

African Initiated Churches (AICs) have succeeded in disconnecting spiritual growth from the trappings of European and American worldviews. Africa has always had worldviews ingrained in its social fabric. If these are well utilized to interpret biblical texts, the Christian faith, rooted in African cultural soul, will enter into communion with Jesus at the tail end of this age.

Chapter 4

AICS Missiological Insights

There are three main phases of Christian history in Africa. The first phase is North African Christianity, which was centered in Alexandria, Carthage, and Hippo. The second phase involves the Portuguese-Roman Catholic venture from the 14th to the 17th centuries. This period was marked by a mixture of economic enterprises along the west coast, which were marred by the infamous slave trade. This trade resulted in the horrific trafficking of humans across the Atlantic to North America, the Caribbean, and South America. The third phase is the missionary enterprise of the 19th and 20th centuries, which led to the rebirth of Christianity in Western, Central, South, and Eastern Africa. It is the Christianity that emerged during this period that will serve as the reference point when investigating the value and importance of African Initiated Churches' theology and the missiological lessons that can help Christians preach the gospel to other living religions, such as traditional African religions.

The scope of this chapter allows for a discussion on broad areas of the *Mission Dei* (the mission of God) to humankind, as revealed in the Bible. These areas include intercultural communication, cultural practices congruent with the Bible, cultural practices that negate the gospel message, as well as health and healing, mediums of divine communication, prophecy, and supernatural experiences (including the occult).

Missiology is defined as the activity of God, which originates in the Holy Trinity (Isaiah 6:6-8) and is carried out through the Great Commission passed on to the apostles (the

Church) (Matthew 28:19-20). The God of the Bible sends messengers, prophets, and leaders to His people. "Finally, He sends His Son in the *malkuth* (kingdom), the active reign of God to humankind and the world." The Mission Dei in this chapter is broader than the church's goal of establishing a Christian presence in every place. The mission itself is the instrument of the Church, not the Church which is the instrument of the mission. This means that the role of the Church is to participate in the *Mission Dei*.¹⁵ When the mission is the subject and the Church the means, this removes bigotry, which has often been pervasive in mission enterprises, as seen in liturgies and other church practices that are influenced by Western worldviews but not necessarily biblical principles. This lengthy introduction sets the stage for an easy discussion of various issues without delving into the biblical or historical background. However, it is important to note that the African worldview, encompassing religious heritage and culture, has been embraced in Christian theology by African Initiated Churches (AICs).

Intercultural communication is inherent in many African peoples, and African Initiated Churches (AICs) have adopted this invaluable consensus-building strategy, something the early missionaries lacked. The traditional religions of the people were often labeled as pagan, and their rituals were intended to be destroyed—whether in Africa, India, Mexico, or China.¹⁶ However, there were a few missionaries who saw the religious systems of what they referred to as "savages" as a preparation for the gospel. (It's worth noting that the term "savages" was still used by Barrett as late as 1968!) On the whole, the missionary attitude in many areas was one of total

¹⁵ Ibid., 219-220

¹⁶ David B. Barrett, *Schisms and renewal in Africa*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968), 84 21 Ibid., 85-86

hostility to traditional culture and religion.

In contrast, the mission should be one of dialogue, not hostility. Crossing over to the people with the gospel means crossing geographical, social, cultural, or political boundaries. This was the appropriate approach.¹⁷ Christ Himself crossed barriers of gender and racism, engaging women in conversations, particularly with the Samaritan woman. His breaking of the barriers between men and women is biblically attested (Eph2: 11-16). Dialoguing with a living religion is vital since we share the same, humanity, as we seek true meaning of life in Jesus' teaching. Missiological issues are to be understood. So, any missionary activities will require translating the gospel into the language of the people to whom it is preached.¹⁸ Understanding the language and culture of people is indispensable when it comes to effective evangelism. A noteworthy example can be found in the classic missionary book *The Peace Child*, where the author achieved a breakthrough in evangelism by utilizing the well-known concept of the "peace child." In the tradition of the people, a peace child was given as a sign that both parties were serious about maintaining harmony. The author then introduced the "Prince of Peace," Jesus, who died to reconcile humanity with God, and this connection resonated deeply with the people. As a result, the Christian faith spread phenomenally among them.

The gospel is not meant to annihilate culture but rather to affirm and perfect it according to Jesus' teachings. The encounter between indigenous values and the gospel is articulated in Christian theology as follows:

- There are significant dangers in the process of indigenization. It could either lead to syncretism,

¹⁷ Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 128

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 218.

where the gospel is merged with incompatible elements of the culture, or to the transformative power of Christianity, where the gospel renews and elevates the culture. However, the gospel must be translated—both linguistically and culturally—if it is to be properly understood and embraced.¹⁹

- As the missionary activities grew, Barret says that, "at the same time, missions did not always perceive that they were being manipulated by the imperial powers."²⁰ It was a matter of fact as widely believed when Barret says that, "religious congregations were seen by them (colonial powers) as valuable instruments for pacifying the conquered."²¹ No wonder Karl Marx termed religion as the opium of the masses when launching the Marxist doctrine of socialism.

Had dialogue prevailed, the church's development and growth might have aligned with Henry Venn's 19th-century "three-self principles"—self-government, self-support, and self-propagation—an essential model for sustainable church growth.²²

Africans have long been known for their dialectical skills, where traditional settings foster negotiation and consensus-building. This legacy of dialogue is reflected in the early Christian theologians of the first five centuries CE, including Athanasius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Celsus, Augustine, Cyprian, and Tertullian. These scholars were instrumental in shaping Christian doctrine, particularly in formulating the Trinity and defining ecclesiology (the study of

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Barret D. B, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, 88

²¹ Ibid., 86-87

²² Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 218

the church). Their contributions cemented Africa's role as the intellectual and theological foundation of what later became Western Christianity.

In contemporary African society, *wazees* (elders) are revered for their wisdom and serve as counselors, with guidance often gender-specific to ensure cultural relevance. The effectiveness of inter-cultural gospel communication, as well as the shared characteristics of Ethiopian (African nationalist) and Zionist/Spiritual Christianity across Sub-Saharan Africa, stems from the region's deep-rooted tradition of inter-communal dialogue. This ability to engage across cultural boundaries has been emphasized here due to its relative absence in missionary work—an omission that weakens other missiological aspects when dialogic skills are not applied. Servanthood is a fundamental component of God's mission, reflecting divine service to humanity as taught in Scripture. True mission, or evangelism—which can be used interchangeably in this context—must be embodied not only through words but also through tangible acts of service and compassionate living.²³ Lee further explains that, the world is going to hell in a basket, because of the corruption or greed, but that there is an alternative living wherein abundant life is possible.²⁴

As an evangelical engaged in mission, one must embody the Christian values they preach. Authentic evangelism is not merely about words but about living a life that reflects the gospel message. In his chapter *Evangelism: How to Make Disciples Make a Difference*, Lee Camp emphasizes this principle, stating: "If you want people to believe what you say, you must live as if you believe what you

²³ Lee C. Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World*, (Grand Rapids, Illinois: Brazos Press, 2003), 189

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 189

say. Our profession and practice will oftentimes require critique of existing structures or practices." This highlights the necessity of integrity in mission work—where faith is not just proclaimed but demonstrated through a life of service, justice, and genuine discipleship.²⁵

By and large, African Initiated Churches (AICs) have strived to live out the gospel they preach. While there is no single ideal standard of faith applicable to all, AICs have embodied the essence of Koinonia—a true Ecclesia (community) of the Jesus movement. Their decision to secede from mission churches stemmed from a realization that they were practicing a Westernized version of Christianity rather than one deeply rooted in the Bible and their own cultural context.

Gerrieter Haar articulates the reasons for this departure clearly:

first, AICs sought freedom from the rigid traditions and discipline imposed by established churches; and second, they rejected the unwillingness of these churches to allow contextual adaptations within their frameworks.

Despite being educated and trained, African clergy were often denied leadership roles and meaningful opportunities to serve. Yet, the model set by Jesus—who calls each person to serve, worship, and provide both physical and spiritual care—challenges such limitations.

The need for pastoral presence is not optional. When members face difficulties such as illness, loss of property, or unemployment, pastoral counsel and support become crucial.

²⁵ Lee C. Camp, *Mere Discipleship: Radical Christianity in a Rebellious World*, 189

Jesus exemplified this presence—He comforted the widow of Nain by reviving her son, consoled Martha and Mary by raising Lazarus, and intervened at the wedding in Cana to prevent social embarrassment. Likewise, AIC pastors emphasize their availability, often through group leader networks, ensuring that members feel supported. This commitment to presence is also reflected in the ethos of Neo-Pentecostal movements, which embrace inspiring mottos like "Ordinary people, extraordinary lives." In traditional churches, clergy—whether priests, ministers, or bishops—often exhibit a degree of aloofness, engaging primarily in private counseling sessions, particularly for couples preparing for marriage or those facing marital difficulties. However, day-to-day fellowship with the congregation is often lacking.

If church leadership in mainline denominations such as the Anglicans, African Inland Church, Presbyterians, and Methodists were more engaged with grassroots communities, they might have helped mitigate the violence that erupted in Kenya following the general elections of December 2007 to March 2008. Church ministers must step down from hierarchical detachment and immerse themselves among ordinary worshippers, embodying Christ's example. People seek not only to hear their leaders from the pulpit but also to interact with them in social and home fellowship settings.

The church's prophetic role in Kenya's 1992 ethnic clashes stands as a commendable example of nurturing public morality. As Aquiline Tarimo observes, "A good example is the role played by the church to defuse tension by creating conditions that blocked the spread of the ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley, Kenya in 1992." Similarly, through the lay community of Sant'Egidio, churches played a crucial role in the reconciliation process in Mozambique. These examples highlight the transformative power of an engaged and proactive

church in fostering peace and social cohesion.²⁶ Presence brings home being there for, or to work along with.²⁷ Health and healing is a critical area of mission. Healing ministry is another aspect of AICs that lays emphasis on non-biomedical remedies. This contrasts with modern medicine that came into the health healing realm with the age of science. In his mission on earth, Jesus preached, healed, exorcised demons and preached shalom (peace) which implies righteousness, justice, fellowship, wholeness and harmony of life.²⁸

Missionary work should be carried out by individuals who see themselves as God's co-workers, as stated in 1 Corinthians 3:9: "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building." The ministry of healing holds a central place in most African Independent Churches (AICs). Sundkler contrasts this with mainline churches, noting that: "While the Roman Church is an institute of grace through its sacraments, the Protestant Church in Africa appears as an institute of the Word through teaching and preaching. The Independent Church, of the Zionist type, is an institute of healing." This distinction underscores how AICs integrate faith with tangible expressions of healing and restoration, embodying a holistic approach to ministry that resonates deeply within African communities.²⁹ Sundkler is not saying that there is no healing in other ministry churches as healing is pivotal to all church activity. What he is saying is that Zionist type, "is not a church, it is a hospital."³⁰ At this point, it becomes evident that while mainline missions established schools, hospitals, and

²⁶ Aquiline Tarino, *Applied Ethnic and Africans Social Reconstruction*, 102

²⁷ John E. Booty, *The Church in History*, 2018

²⁸ Alan Richardson, *Dictionary of Christian theology*, 218

²⁹ Bengt G. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961), 220

³⁰ *Ibid*, 220

dispensaries as part of their evangelistic efforts, they largely overlooked the ministry of healing through prayer and exorcism. The practices of laying hands on the sick and addressing psychosomatic ailments were either sidelined or entirely neglected. In their place, psychiatry and counseling services—often influenced by Eastern mysticism—gained prominence, except within prophet-healing and charismatic Christian circles.

Though the scope of this chapter does not allow for an extensive discussion of the healing ministry in African Independent Churches (AICs), it is important to highlight that healing—whether through prayer, altar calls, crusades, or personal ministry—is a fundamental aspect of AIC spirituality. Whether among Ethiopian churches, nationalist movements, Roho churches, Zionist congregations, or Aladura traditions, healing remains central. People resonate with these practices and often testify to their transformative experiences of restoration.

This emphasis on healing offers a crucial lesson to mainline churches: biomedical healing has limitations. Jesus himself acknowledged this reality, sometimes employing unconventional methods—such as using mud to heal a blind man—and at other times simply commanding evil spirits to leave their victims. Scripture explicitly instructs believers to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil. Additionally, in many spiritual churches, water is used as a purifying agent in healing rituals.

The causes of sickness extend beyond the physical realm, often involving unseen spiritual factors. Therefore, a multifaceted approach to healing is necessary. While spiritual churches emphasize divine healing, those that reject modern medicine entirely may need to reconsider their stance. Healing must be understood within the African worldview, where both

spiritual and physical dimensions of disease must be addressed. In the twenty-first century, integrating healing services and deliverance sessions into worship could be a valuable approach. However, outright rejection of medical treatment is unwise. Instead, churches should embrace a holistic biblical perspective on healing. As Weatherhead aptly states in *Present-day Non-medical Methods of Healing*: "All healing is from God."³¹ He contends: "no man has ever healed another. All he (man) (sic) has done is to cooperate with God either at the physical, psychological or spiritual level of man's (sic) personality."³² Illness and health will continue to be a major existential concern in humankind.

The role of spiritual gifts within the missiological activities of African Initiated Churches (AICs) represents a deeply pneumatological dimension that warrants serious reconsideration by mainline church missions. In reflecting on the experiences of 19th-century missiologists, it becomes evident that a reappraisal of spiritual gifts is necessary to avoid repeating past mistakes.

As discussed in the section on divine healing, African Traditional Religion (ATR) presents a rich spiritual worldview, which includes a hierarchy of divinities, ancestors, spirits, and the "living-dead." In this context, the Holy Spirit—being the third person of the Trinity—naturally occupies a central place in African Christian spirituality.

Gerrieter Haar, in his study of African Christians in Europe, identifies several freedoms that are integral to the

³¹ DejiAyegboyin, *Heal the Sick and Cast out Demons*, The Aladura Response in Alistair Kee (Editor) *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 10.2 2004, 244

³² Leslie Weatherhead, *Present Day Non-medical Method in Healing* in John Crowley Smith (ed.), *Religion and Medicine* (London: Epworth, 1962), 32

expression of African Christianity:

- The freedom to exercise spiritual gifts and participate in vibrant, movement-filled worship.
- The freedom to assume leadership roles and create new forms of church institutions.
- The freedom to adapt or reinforce moral requirements in accordance with local circumstances.
- The freedom to achieve financial autonomy, thereby reducing reliance on external funding.

These characteristics exemplify the dynamic and flexible nature of AICs, where the Holy Spirit plays an active role in both mission and ministry. For mainline churches, this offers a valuable opportunity to reassess their approach to spiritual gifts, ensuring that their missiological strategies are more attuned to the lived realities and spiritual practices of African Christians.³³ The African doctrine of the Holy Spirit is rooted in Joel chapter two, the Pentecost story in Acts chapter two, and several other passages in the Bible, such as Jeremiah 31:33-35, where the law of God is said to be written in people's hearts and minds. Activities of the Holy Spirit, including spirit possession, exorcism of demons, healing of psychosomatic ailments, and breaking curses, are common in AICs. Speaking in tongues is a regular practice in most AICs. The notion of the "impoverished Western gospel," often referenced in literature, is reinforced by the neglect of this cardinal doctrine.

The disciples were instructed to remain in Jerusalem to receive the power of the Holy Spirit to evangelize in Judea and to the ends of the earth. While white missionaries reached the edge of the world, the power of the Holy Spirit was not "seen"

³³ GerrierterHaar, *African Christians in Europe*, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2001), 268

in them. Instead, preaching and teaching were framed within Western religion-cultural paradigms. African culture and worldview, however, dictate that worship involves the whole person—body, mind, and spirit. African music and dance, with all their emotive expressions, illustrate this, as evidenced in the practices of AICs.

In developing critical or advisory theology, I agree with William Dryness when he states, "As we admire the faith of other people, we must avoid romanticizing their Christianity. We have to learn from others, but not assume that their way of believing in God is automatically better than ours."³⁴ I would dare to pass judgment that spiritual gifts are endowed by God and are varied. No individual is promised all of them. Whatever one possesses—whether it is prophecy, teaching, or another gift—serves the growth of the Body of Christ. The neglect or misuse of spiritual gifts puts each of us on notice, as the Bible warns us not to grieve the Holy Spirit, for this is outright blasphemy.

Community (church or ecclesia) is a significant missiological aspect. In carrying out the Mission Dei, partnership is the guiding principle. Missionary dominance and paternalism must cease, as they hinder contextualized Christianity.³⁵ AICs foster the traditional form of solidarity that provides support for physically disabled family members, ensuring they are not impoverished.³⁶ This value of mutual concern is evident in many AICs, including neo-Pentecostal churches. This stands in contrast to the Western individualistic lifestyle that has been passed on to the mainline churches,

³⁴ William A. Dryness, *Invitation to Cross-cultural Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House 1992), 157

³⁵ Alan Richardson, *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 220

³⁶ Aquiline Tarimo, *Applied Ethics and Africa's Social Reconstruction*, 165-166

particularly evident in mega-churches in urban settings.

This does not mean that former mission churches do not shoulder social responsibility—far from it. However, the help provided is often institutionalized. Sometimes, in an effort to reach others, the needs of our own are neglected, leaving the clergy to wonder why they are overlooked when ministering to the marginalized. In AICs, social responsibility is grounded at the grassroots level, having grown from ordinary believers who, at their founding, were poor and illiterate (though this is not the case among neo-Pentecostals).

The oral theology of the independent churches is participant oriented, experiential in nature and culturally defined.³⁷ In apartheid South Africa and in post-apartheid South Africa; AICS have shown unswerving resilience and continue to lay active positive role in social, political and religious sphere. The basis of their involvement has been the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Ethos of mutual support through which mutuality harmonize with social responsibility).³⁸ Elsewhere in the continent *Ubuntu* solidarity has same *Bantu* linguistic root. In Swahili it is *Utu*, and in Kikuyu *Ũmũndũ*.

Right from their initiation, AICs allowed indigenous Christians to give expression of their Christian faith, contrary to the cultural and political predominance of European colonialism as propagated by some missionaries of the western churches.³⁹ AICs sided with the African proletariat who flocked to urban centers as migrant laborers, having left their families (women and children) in designated Bantustans, the tribal homelands.⁴⁰ In South Africa, as elsewhere in Africa, AICs

³⁷ Gerriertter Haar, *African Christians in Europe*, 216

³⁸ G.C. Oathuizen "Africa Indigenous Churches in Post-Apartheid South Africa"" in Grace Wamue and Mathew M. Theuri (Editors), *Quest for Integrity*

³⁹ Ibid., 100

⁴⁰ Ibid.,101-104

covertly participated in politics. Their resistance to white domination was due to the parallelism they found in politics. Their resistance to white domination was due to the parallelism they found between Christianity and African culture. On liberation, the exodus motif in the Old Testament was more than the mere Jewish story of liberation from Pharaoh in Egypt. Colonialists were pharaohs by all descriptions.⁴¹

When the gospel met the African communalism, although in itself it allowed communal life in sharing wealth, and means of production, the missionaries collaborated with the imperial rulers and alienated land confining the indigenous people to crowded "a native reserve." The churches should have adopted the *ūmūdū* way of social structures as it is biblical. Social injustice, strongly condemned in the prophecies of the Old Testament, was often tolerated by many. In contrast, Jesus broke down tribal and racial barriers. However, missionaries frequently condoned segregation and color bias, both in politics and within the church.

The place of women in the church and society is another malady, a by-product of Western culture riding on the gospel. AICs give prominence to women in churches, with women constituting the majority in the healing ministry. As in traditional society, there are prophets and priests leading AICs in the Bible, and Jesus liberated women. In the early church (New Testament epoch), there were women prophetesses, such as the daughters of Philip the Evangelist. There were also women presbyters and deacons, as well as women traders who owned property, such as Dorcas, the purple-linen trader (Acts 9:36-39). Romans Chapter 16 includes a catalog of prominent women who supported Paul financially from their means. In mainline churches, however, the role of women in church life is chiefly limited to hospitality, while the priesthood is reserved

⁴¹ Ibid., 104

for men. It is no wonder that women have developed African women's theology, seeking liberation from patriarchy, androcentrism, and misogyny in both religious and public spaces.

It has not been the aim of this chapter to explore the minor missiological aspects of the gospel that are worth considering as Christianity encounters a primal religion. However, aspects such as reconciliation, forgiveness, and the confession of "failure in love" need to be understood. Local languages exist, but they are minor missiological aspects that can be discussed within the main ones, as this chapter has endeavored to do. As each aspect has been discussed and evaluated on a piecemeal basis—both from the AICs' perspective and from the Gospel (i.e., missionary agents)—it is now fitting to make general observations.

The developments that the colonialists spoke of may have, in fact, underdeveloped Africa. Africa was a source of raw materials for European industries, and the network of our infrastructure points primarily to the seaports. The nation-to-nation road or railway network is non-existent. Alienated land fell into the hands of greedy Africans or, in some cases, remains in the possession of white people or missionaries in post-colonial Africa. The land question remains a difficult issue, as evidenced in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, where the land problem persists. It has been a source of tribal conflicts and racial tensions. Missionary Christianity cannot escape blame for the initial economic "crimes." They may only be forgiven for failing in their prophetic role. Some churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, alienated large chunks of land, just as the colonial authorities did.

After defining development, Dr. Philemona Mwaura says: "Development must not be restricted to the economic sphere only (then and now onwards), but to social as well as

spiritual aspects of human beings... it must make human beings the focus as well as the goal."⁴² She adds to say that gospel message of love is negated by poverty.⁴³

I hasten to add that it is a missiological concern to ensure that the unchurched are evangelized and enabled to experience the abundant life that Christ preached (John 10:10), and that they are released from demon possession and healed from other diseases. The spirit of capitalism that emerged with the Reformation of the 16th century came alongside the preaching of the gospel. This spirit requires checking, as has been done in the Scandinavian countries of Norway and Sweden. The runaway capitalism epitomized by the American economy, characterized by homelessness and economic collapse due to fraud and dishonesty, needs re-evaluation. Here at home, we have followed the same path, where grand corruption, nepotism, and tribalism are endemic, resulting in escalating crime.

The church—both AICs and mainline churches—should engage in ecumenical dialogue and cooperation to ensure that Christianity fosters public morality and ethics from a united front. Otherwise, left to politicians, human greed will continue to drive African nations deeper into economic and social crises. The struggles between president and his deputy in Kenya in 2024 culminating in impeachment provide enough evidence to reject state intervention in the religious space. The state, by its mandate, should only enter the religious sphere to restore law and order. This should have been done in the Shakahola tragedy. The official failure to act was being stealthily used to justify attempts to tax tithes and offerings. Let

⁴² Philemona Mwaura, "African instituted churches and socio-economic development" in Grace Wamue and Mathew M. Theuri (eds), *Quest for integrity in Africa*, 77

⁴³ Ibid., 75

it be on record that once a believer has paid their tithes and offerings, these funds should be considered untouchable. The purpose of this is aligned with the *Missio Dei*—full stop.

John E. Booty's sentiments, found in the Churches Teaching series, provide a fitting conclusion: "There are many pitfalls along the way (in mission work). Christians have often witnessed not Christ, but something else—nation, race, class, or self. They can be so concerned with the success of the church as an institution that they end up competing with other witnesses for glory and converts."⁴⁴

As this appraisal of what AICs can offer in missiology-cum-evangelism come to a close, the words of William Dryness which I agree with are very appropriate that, "When all is said and done we must be able to learn from each other because we finally, stand before God, we will have brought with us all the glory and honor of the nations (Rev 21:26). Meanwhile, we need each other."⁴⁵

As I conclude, although AICS are accused of neglecting the Son in the Trinity, it is observable that baptism is done in the Trinitarian formula. Divergence comes where other elements such as oil, laying a flag on the candidate is done. Sometimes as is among the Akūrinū churches in Kenya, shaking of hands three times is the mode of carrying out baptism. In other AICs the Bible is placed on the head of person being baptized.

This chapter has broadly touched on spatial "mission frontiers" but has centered on the deliberations on cultural and social differences as boundaries to be crossed. Social-economic and political considerations have been brought out in detail because social action on the part of the individual and the

⁴⁴ John E. Booty, *The Church in History*, 203-204

⁴⁵ William A. Dryness, *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology: Case Studies in Vernacular Theologies*

clergy becomes the mission's core task or even the reason for the existence of the church (or organization).⁴⁶ There is need to shift from the old geographical paradigm of what missionary activity is. The inter-church cooperation is what remains with the most traditional "mission societies."⁴⁷ There is a paradigm of mission work. Today all frontiers of human activity meant to enhance life are part of *Missio-Dei* (God's intended purpose for humanity).

The missiological aspects dealt with in this chapter are mission insights because they share value with what Mika Vohakangas calls doing mission only if it carries out the will of God as he clarifies that, "Even if our work will be called mission, it is not mission if it does not remain true to the gospel in its form spirit or content." Any critique on this chapter would be justifiable if it only points areas of the missiological aspects in the AICs which are outside the tenets of the gospel that Christ proclaimed.

⁴⁶ Ronilick E. K. Mchamiand Benjamin Simon (eds), *Church Ministry in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2006), 10

⁴⁷ Ibid

CHAPTER 5

Acknowledging African Christianity in Diaspora

The term "diaspora" traces its usage back to the Hebrew people, who were exiled in Babylon, far from Palestine. They worshiped God (Yahweh) in foreign lands. Similarly, Africans migrated to various parts of the globe—South America, North America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East—during the period of the inhuman slave trade. In these foreign lands, they brought with them their traditional religious heritage and cultural values, which continue to manifest in religion, music styles, and the ways they worship God in the Christian context.

This discussion will not delve into those historical aspects but will focus on African Christianity that has moved to Europe and North America, beginning in the first quarter of the last century and continuing to the present day. Additionally, the scope of this analysis will not follow a historical framework but will concentrate on the characteristics and significance of this Christianity in the diaspora—both in the lives of those living in foreign lands and in the host communities. A reflection on the impact of this diaspora faith on the Church in Africa will also be addressed. Today some of the largest congregations in Europe are either founded by Africans or are led by peoples of African descent. A good example is Bishop of York of the Church of England, John Ssentumu, a Uganda and former Christian union leader at Makerere University in the

early 1970s.⁴⁸ He migrated to Europe due to the General Idi Amin's persecution of prominent personalities and has lived in Britain since then. "African Christians in Europe require pastors from both ends to embrace fraternal love in order to confront the great challenges that question the Christian faith in today's globalized society Words of the founders or pastors of the Christian churches in diaspora enlightens us on their characteristics.⁴⁹ Olu Abiola, the founder of Aladura International Church while addressing a conference had this to say: "All I can say is that African Churches in Europe are in a different class of their own. They are not a threat to anybody for two reasons. First they are not financially or economically powerful. Second, they depend on the goodwill of all our Christian brothers and sisters in allowing us to use their premises for worship and spiritual activities although actually at very exorbitant rental price."⁵⁰

Here we see that African Christianity is self-supporting, it operates in cells in people's premises, where they do not have big premises; either their own or rented. These churches would wish that they are not being seen as a threat by the national churches (implied). The diaspora churches provide spiritual/human warmth that any human being longs for in any social space. Varied literature on African churches in diaspora have examples of unwelcome incidents where one thinks

⁴⁸ I was a Christian union member in the institution 1972-1975

⁴⁹ Pope John Paul II, Address to participants in a Symposium of Bishops of Africa and Europe, Saturday, November 13, 2004; Google, mhtml, African Churches in Diaspora, accessed on July 1, 2009.

⁵⁰ Oluwole A. Abiola, African Churches in Europe, Council of African and Afro-Caribbean Churches, UK, delivered at the international coalition for Religious Freedom Conference and The New Millennium, Berlin Germany, May 29-31, 1998, Google MHTML, African Churches in Diaspora accessed on July, 1 2009.

he/she would be welcome in a church of own denomination; only to find the reverse is the reality. Olu Abiola, the founder of Aladura International Church is on record as having been disappointed by a white minister who directed him to a church of "his own kind," a Black Pentecostal church.⁵¹ African Christianity in diaspora is an offshoot of African instituted churches (AICs). They bring with them the Theology different from the classical western Theology of sin, salvation of the soul, heaven and hell. Not that this is irrelevant, but that God can do all things here and now, not just in the heavenly promise when the soul would be saved.⁵²

The preaching by African pastors, therefore, often includes participatory worship, healing sessions, and deliverance from both physical and spiritual ailments. The resentment mentioned earlier, along with differing worldviews and spiritualities, led Africans to establish their own churches, which numbered over one thousand by 1998. According to information from the aforementioned conference, despite the constitutional guarantee of freedom of worship, there has been official discrimination. For instance, in 1960, churches in the diaspora applied to join the National British Council of Churches but were rejected because they did not belong to the categories of Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans, or Presbyterians.

Fervent spiritual urge too is a main characteristic of African Christian Churches in diaspora, more so in Europe. In the Ministry of John Piper, there is a writer who "thinks that authentic contextualized African Theology, imbued with God's missional spirit can help the west regain its biblical moorings"⁵³

⁵¹ Ogbu U. Kalu (Editor), *African Christianity: An African story*, (Pretoria: Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria; 2005), 507.

⁵² Ogbu U. Kalu (Editor), *African Christianity: An African story*, 507.

⁵³ African churches in Europe Desiring for God, Ministry of John Piper, Google html document, accessed on July 1, 2009

The spiritual behavior of African churches in diaspora portrayed in this article as championing revival movement as these immigrants' challenge relativism of European culture. Here, it is to be noted that moral relativism in the extreme leads to a normless society, where the individual becomes an authority to self to the extent of being God. In extreme cases the Bible is misrepresented whereby "in the last days when God will be all in all, then the individual becomes god!"

It is an accepted notion for several years now that there is a shift of Christianity from Global North to Global South. Science and technology have prompted secularization which in people's view makes God redundant. The so-called Enlightenment/modernity is availing people an alternative way of life. It is true. Science is staying in the way of faith. Unfortunately, science and technology are becoming a human snare. It is in this situation that immigrant churches seem to fill the void left by the moribund mode of worship in western traditional churches; such that the dynamism of the immigrants is injecting new spiritual energy."⁵⁴

The article highlights the fact that, in the areas of mission, migration, and diaspora, Africans have embraced evangelization, making it an international movement. A key feature of African diaspora Christianity is its international missiological initiative, which has led to the planting of churches not only in Europe and America but also in various African countries. Rituals among African Christians in Europe are a distinct characteristic. This is not to say that national churches in host countries do not have rituals, but in AICs, which have driven the growth of migrant churches, rituals permeate nearly all aspects of religious life. These ritual acts, performed by individuals or communities, serve a specific

⁵⁴ African led Christianity in Europe: migration and Diaspora evangelism by Kwabena Asamoah- Gyadu

purpose, with benefits that may be either material or spiritual.⁵⁵ Such rituals include dedication of a child, healing rituals or purification rituals. In the True Teachings of Christ Temple, in Netherland warding off evil spirits is carried out by burning incense.⁵⁶

In this church, ushering in the New Year involves an all-night vigil, during which the annual foot-washing ceremony takes place. Singing, dancing, and Bible reading are integral parts of the event, but what stands out is the pastors washing each member's feet and anointing them with oil. Another distinct characteristic of African Christianity in the diaspora is the numerous church offices, which are not as elaborate in mainline churches. These roles are diverse and include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.⁵⁷

It is difficult to define the character of African Christianity with precision. The discussion so far has been general, but the following examples provide glimpses into the faith and life of Christians in these diaspora churches. The Ghanaian community in Bulmer is closely associated with numerous cultural, religious, and welfare organizations.⁵⁸ This shows that Christian congregations are not the only organizations Ghanaians have formed in the Netherlands.⁵⁹ However, as is the case elsewhere, migrants come from diverse backgrounds—political, academic, or economic—but religion has always been a significant aspect.⁶⁰ The point I am making

⁵⁵ GerrieTerHaar, *African Christians in Europe*, (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2001), 96

⁵⁶ Ibid.,99

⁵⁷ Ibid.,99

⁵⁸ GerrieTerHaar, *African Christians in Europe*,217 66 Ibid, 212

⁵⁹ Ibid, 212

⁶⁰ Google MHTML Document, Report on Project - Team meeting, "Transitional Nigerian Pentecostal Churches in Europe" and Norface Conference in Lisbon 10th-14th November (n.d.)

here is that although there are various groupings, religion is a common denominator among most of these people. Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is so popular in the United Kingdom, that Prince Charles celebrated his birthday in its parish.⁶¹

In this document, there is information that RCCG has over three hundred branches in the UK. In Germany this church has six branches. In the Netherlands it has nineteen parishes; one or more in every major city. It is worth noting that RCCG was started in the Netherlands by a Dutch lady, sent from a parish in the UK in the late nineties. So the growth is quite phenomenal."⁶²

In Texas, USA, the RCCG has purchased 250 hectares in Dallas to develop a Redemption Camp similar to the one in Nigeria (Ogbu O. Kalu, *African Christianity*, 508). In Eastern Europe, the *Church of the Embassy of God* in Kyiv, Ukraine, has marked a new phase for AICs, according to Andrew F. Walls in his article *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*. Pastor Sunday Adelaja's church in Ukraine, with a total membership of 25,000 adults, is predominantly European.⁶³ The full name of the church is particularly interesting—*The Blessed Embassy of the Kingdom of God for All Nations*. It symbolizes an embassy that is "higher" than the individual national embassies hosted by Ukraine in Kyiv. Another notable congregation is Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) in London, led by Nigerian pastor Matthew Ashimolowo. While the church primarily consists of Africans and people of African descent, it also includes a few

⁶¹ Burgess, R. (2011). Bringing back the gospel: Reverse mission among Nigerian Pentecostals in Britain. *Journal of Religion in Europe*, 4(3), 429-449.

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ International Bulletin Research, April 26, 2006 article by Gyadu J. Kwabena, accessed July 1, 2009.

Europeans who seek spiritual solace there.

The significance of African Christianity in the diaspora is remarkable. These churches address not only spiritual needs but also financial and other personal concerns, making them essential to translocated communities, including both legal and undocumented migrants. Many refugees, in particular, require spiritual nurturing that they may not receive from their often-skeptical host communities, including national churches.

Diaspora churches are also carving out economic spaces for themselves. By purchasing land and constructing church complexes, they provide immigrants with a sense of belonging and human fulfillment. It is common in cities such as London, Hamburg, Paris, and Cologne for these churches to acquire abandoned churches, disco halls, and cinemas, repurposing them for worship. In doing so, they are reclaiming desecrated spaces and resacralizing them.

Some of these churches have a fleet of buses, own business centers, cybercafés, computer training AIC centers, musical halls, and video and cassette shops—all indicating that, even in the diaspora, they have come of age. The impact of diaspora Christianity on the church in Africa is tremendous. Just as in Africa, African churches in Europe do not preach a gospel focused solely on "soul saving." Instead, they emphasize a holistic salvation—one that addresses the here and now, not just the promise of heaven. Euro-American Christianity is beginning to recognize this approach. Evangelicals in Europe and North America likely appreciate the support of African churches in spreading the prosperity gospel.

As new churches emerge in Europe and America, mainline churches back home are realizing that the charismatic movement cannot be excluded from denominations like the Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, or even the Roman Catholic Church in Africa. Diaspora music, vibrant with

African rhythms, is resonating with European audiences, as exemplified by the church in Kyiv. This clearly suggests that mainline churches must embrace cultural elements once dismissed as "devilish."

African communalism, deeply rooted in our traditions, is finding a place in diaspora churches, particularly in environments where living conditions are challenging. If this is happening abroad, African churches at home must also re-examine their spirituality and make necessary adjustments, as long as they align with biblical teachings.

For diaspora churches with headquarters in Africa—such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)—their influence extends beyond the diaspora. A clear example is the RCCG center in Nairobi, located along Mbagathi Way (now renamed Raila Odinga Way).

Sound teaching by African churches in the diaspora, supported by their AICs in Africa, is a vital force being infused into European culture. I fully support the diaspora church in viewing its mission as a "reversal mission to Europe." Even more so, if diaspora Christianity is influencing secularism in Europe, then the African church must continue to remove formalism in worship, ensuring that true worship becomes the hallmark of African Christianity.

African-initiated churches should take up this challenge alongside mainline churches to facilitate praxeology in Christian life. If this happens, issues such as corruption, tribalism, ethnic strife, and poor governance—long associated with African nations—could be significantly reduced. The love of God and neighbor, though humanly challenging, can be realized if the state collaborates with the church to create a just society. Ultimately, however, each individual Christian is called to live out their faith authentically.

In conclusion, the term diaspora should not be

understood to mean that these individuals will eventually return to Africa, though some do. Many have settled permanently and are raising families. However, there is ongoing pastoral exchange between Africa and the diaspora, facilitated through prayer networks, internet platforms, special religious conferences, videos, and televangelism. This allows diaspora preaching and spirituality to be shared widely.⁶⁴

Just as in Africa, both strands of AICs—Spiritual and Pentecostal/Charismatic—are present in Europe. They share a common trait in that they derive specific features from African culture.⁶⁵ Additionally, African priests are sometimes employed by mainstream churches in host countries, such as the Episcopal, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, and Catholic churches, where they primarily serve African congregations.⁶⁶

The freelance evangelist who embarks on short-term missions overseas forms the nexus of evangelism and inter-religious networks referenced above.⁶⁷ African Christians in Europe maintain linkages with their home centers, though on a secondary level. African international churches in Europe, North America, and Australia (mainly Coptic churches from Egypt) mark a new phase in Christian history. With the North-South shift, Africa has become a major center of Christianity. The key players originate from Africa, and as a result, the evolving spirituality will continue to shape Christian life in both directions.

A significant example of this transformation is evident in Ogbu O. Kalu's observation of changes within mainline Christianity. He notes that "mainline churches are being compelled to adjust by enlarging space for charismatic groups

⁶⁴ Ogbu O. Kalu, *African Christianity. An African Story*, 512

⁶⁵ Gerrieter Haar, *African Christians in Europe*, 143-144.

⁶⁶ Ogbu O. Kalu, *African Christianity. An African Story*, 504

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 504

in policy, liturgy, and ethics."⁶⁸ He further explains that practices such as tithing, fasting, prayer bands, healing sessions, and altar calls—alongside other forms of liturgical renewal—are now widespread. Thus, African Christianity in the diaspora does not influence Christian spirituality solely in host countries. African clergy in former mission churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, are also learning from contextual and situational theology within the global church. Ogbu O. Kalu documents what religious and sociological studies affirm: African churches have demonstrated a strong determination to establish global connections and actively seek non-Africans as part of their membership.⁶⁹ Indeed, contemporary African Christianity in the diaspora, alongside historical African Christian ethics, is shaping the global church in profound ways.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 365

⁶⁹ Ibid., 504

CHAPTER 6

Approximate Ways for African Church Interpretation of the Bible.

In interpreting biblical passages—whether historical, doxological, parabolic, or wisdom literature (such as the wise sayings in the book of Proverbs, parables, or miracles)—a people's worldview should always be considered in context. It is a misstep to assume that African people have a clean slate upon which the Biblical worldview (or Jesus' worldview and teachings) can simply be imposed. In theological terms, a Christian worldview is formed and nurtured by embracing the whole counsel of God, as enshrined in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

After Vatican II (1962-1965), Pope Paul VI opened the way for Roman Catholic Christians to read Scripture in its entirety, rather than focusing solely on the verses or portions incorporated into the Mass liturgy, as was the custom previously. Two decades later, the African Bible was published by Pauline Publications Africa, produced by the Daughters of St. Paul in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Biblical text used in the African Bible is that of the New American Bible. The production was handled by general editors Victor Zikurati and Angelo Colacral, with 39 other editors and contributors from Kenya, including Jane Kiura, Cosmas Otieno, Laurence Njoroge, and Gerald Wanjohi. Scholars from the rest of Africa and outside the continent also contributed (cover page—The African Bible). The Catholic Church is thus recognizing the noble, sacred task of crafting a Bible that is relevant to African culture, resonating with the

African view of God, the creator of the universe—who has been passed down through generations in African myths, as Good News merges with African cosmology in African traditional religion. Yes, one can be truly African and truly Christian without the trappings of Western/European worldviews.

It is the author's considered view that the Biblical worldview—planted by Jesus Christ and fostered by the Apostles and Disciples—continues to shape African worldviews. Let the African Church learn and practice appropriate ways of interpreting the Bible. This chapter, which discusses appropriate methods for African Church interpretation of the Bible, was a reading reaction presented to Dr. Julius Gathongo as part of an assignment for the Advanced Seminar on African Christian Theology (Course TEO602) at Daystar University, Nairobi. It was presented on 24th July 2009. Its advisory was relevant then, and it continues to offer enduring lessons to African Church leadership now and into the future. Sermons and liturgies imported from outside African Christian denominations and ministries need not be consumed wholesale. One such teaching that has plagued African Christian spirituality is the prosperity gospel, which has both its golden and dark sides, where money and wealth, especially on the part of pastors, take center stage.

The reading reaction has been reproduced in whole (in situ). Although some people think so, it is impossible to have a universal hermeneutic in interpreting the Bible. It is futile to conceptualize a universal church that sees all Bible texts the same. True, we are not going to create a new canon, but context, and to a more micro sense, situation(s) have to come into focus in biblical hermeneutics. "It is no longer sensible for Africans to continue reading the Bible from alien perspectives. Even within Africa itself, intercultural biblical hermeneutics is a

must. As much as theology is contextual, and even more so situational, in handling a biblical text, if there is a need to use folklore or proverbs, a preacher would have to use them insofar as they are understood by the audience/congregation."

This reading reaction will summarize what Nahashon Ndungu, Zablon Nthamburi, Emmanuel Obeng, Laurenti Magesa, and Tinyiko Maluleke have written regarding how African Christian theology should deal with biblical hermeneutics so as to build African Christianity—relevant not only to African churches but also to enrich Christian spirituality in the world (universal) church. The universal church is called upon to carry out *Missio-Dei*, across geographical frontiers as well as across "cultural boundaries."⁷⁰

Nahashon Ndungu's article, "The Bible in African Independent Church," in Hanna W. Kinoti and John Waliggo's *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1997), 58-67, has outlined what Biblical interpretation looks like in an African-initiated church—the Akūrinū Churches in Kenya. According to Ndungu, the Akūrinū church was born out of the dissatisfaction of the leaders with the oppression of the Gĩkũyũ people through land alienation, forced labor to work in European farms, taxation, and the issue of female circumcision, which was so central as a rite of passage to adult womanhood. Polygamy and traditional dances were also denounced by the missionaries as paganism.

The Akūrinū did not see any Bible passage that was against female circumcision (although there was none sanctioning it). The counter-emphasis is mine due to the contemporary debate on Female Genital Mutilation, and in the light of the scripture that says we are fearfully and wonderfully

⁷⁰ Ronilick E.K. Mchami and Benjamin Simon (eds), *Church Ministry in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2006), 18

made. In mind, I have the reproductive role of women and what we are told regarding medical complications in childbirth due to scars inflicted, especially in infibulations (the most severe of all types of genital cutting). The value established lies in men, as they want women's sexual desires "tamed" to control promiscuity. This is purely androcentric, misogynistic, and selfish on the part of men. The Bible alone shapes Akūrinū spirituality and way of life.

The Bible is seen as a single unit from Genesis to Revelation.⁷¹ Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Exodus guide the keeping of hair and beard, the restriction on wearing red clothes (Deuteronomy 27:26), the removal of shoes in church (Exodus 3:4-7), the wearing of white turbans, the raising of hands when praying, and even the rejection of modern medicine based on Jeremiah 46:11-12 and Hosea 5:13-15.⁷² The Holy Spirit is carrying out the salvific work that Jesus began. Thus, in the Triune, it is Father, Holy Spirit, and Son. The Akūrinū are people of the Spirit, the people of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff). 1 Corinthians 12 is cherished by the Akūrinū. Deuteronomic ways, as in Deuteronomy 16:16, direct them to the annual prayers held on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays in January, July, and December: the beginning of the year to seek guidance, mid-year thanksgiving, and thanksgiving for the end of the year.

The male domination in church life is based on Jewish tradition, which has been reinforced by Pauline and Deutero-Pauline passages (1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15). However, women are the majority when it comes to Anabii (prophets) who reveal baptismal names, identify marriage

⁷¹ Nahashon Ndungu, *The Bible in an African Independent Church*, 62.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 64

partners, lead in faith healing, and counsel errant members before readmission.

Zablon Nthamburi and Douglas Waruta have not taken a case study. Their topic is titled "Biblical Hermeneutics in African Instituted Churches," in *The Bible in African Christianity: Essays in Biblical Theology* (Hannah W. Kinoti and John M. Waliggo, eds.), pages 40-57. After defining hermeneutics as the art of interpretation, they emphasize that the biblical setting must be understood in order to facilitate application to the contemporary world.⁷³ According to them, the Bible must be understood within its cultural context to be relevant. The Bible and human experience go hand in hand, but care must be taken not to distort interpretation, as was the case in South Africa, where racial superiority was assigned legitimacy using scripture. The law of love for God and the neighbor was outrightly ignored. Therefore, it is vital that the original meaning is recovered in order to make a relevant application in Africa. They then go on to show how Africans should interpret the Bible.

The meaning of the passage to the original hearers, considering their worldview, setting, and culture, once understood, will help contemporary situations make meaning out of it. The second point to consider is that the Christian tradition forms the core theology. The canon must be safeguarded, and syncretism must be avoided since Africa is rich in a mixed world of spirits, witchcraft, poverty, and occultism. The warning here is valid because, in any culture, there are customs or practices that enrich the gospel. However, there are also practices that negate the gospel. Witchcraft, sorcery, licentiousness, and cattle rustling—which result in deaths—do not conform to the gospel and the will of God for humans to have abundant life.

⁷³ Nthamburi & Waruta, 40

Extensive use of vernacular languages is important. Vernacular translations aid enculturation and enhance exegetical skills. This is indeed the case because once the Akūrinū received the New Testament in Kikuyu as early as 1926, they immediately discovered that the third person of the Trinity was not emphasized in Western Christianity, as His role was more peripheral. So, the counselor—God active in the world, who sanctifies and teaches us all things—came into the limelight. That is why they were referred to as *Arata a Roho Mūtherū* (Friends of the Holy Spirit). *Aroti* (dreamers and visionaries) were inspired by Joel's prophecy, which said that young men and women would dream dreams and see visions. Later, when the Old Testament translation into Kikuyu was completed in 1951, the Akūrinū saw the entire incarnation story—from Genesis to Revelation—as one. This one story made no distinction between the Old and New Testaments. All relevant texts that are Jewish and align with the traditions of the Gĩkũyũ people are incorporated into the Akūrinū church. Such texts include those related to ritualistic uncleanness and the prohibition of eating blood or pork.

In the Old Testament, the Exodus motif energizes African Instituted Churches (AICs) to champion liberation from colonialism. Once again, the Akūrinū church serves as a classic example of a peasant uprising against colonial oppression. It is important to note that Joseph Ng'ang'a, the founder of the church (1926-1930), was murdered, along with two followers, when they were confronted by a contingent of nineteen policemen in 1934.⁷⁴

The Bible inspires faith-healing activities in African Instituted Churches (AICs). Therefore, African Christianity

⁷⁴ Lecture Notes by Dr. Philemona Mwaura in Daystar University New Religious Movements" May — July 2009 Trimester

should not view healing activities in spiritual churches such as Aladura, Pentecostal, and neo-Pentecostal movements with suspicion. Jesus' miracles and His promise to the disciples for greater exploits, along with the book of James, should help African Christians apply faith to daily living. Nthamburi and Waruta are conveying what Alan Anderson says: "AICs provide valuable insights into many aspects of missiology, such as intercultural communication of the gospel and the encounter between Christianity and another living religion." In our quest to authentically interpret the Bible, the AICs have pioneered. The African church should take cues from this. Whatever cultural values are affirmed by Scripture, we should accept with grace, without feeling guilty for what Western Christianity has implanted in us.⁷⁵

A summary of how Africans should view the Bible is presented in strong injunctions, which can be summarized as follows: The Bible is a community document, not just a historical one. Obey its message for your good, or disobey it at your peril. The Bible brings hope in hopeless situations. It is like traditional seers and mediums who warn, give counsel, and reveal the mysteries of life. The Bible is the spirit of God speaking. It rebukes when situations call for it.⁷⁶

The common themes in African Hermeneutics, as discussed by Nthamburi and Waruta, include salvation, healing, and wholeness; the quality of human sin, alienation, and suffering, whether physical, psychological, or otherwise; God's promises regarding human depravity and the African desire for relief from it; the importance of initiation rites; hope for the hopeless through God's advocacy; faith in an energized community; championing social morality prophetically;

⁷⁵ Nthamburi & Waruta, 49

⁷⁶ Summary is from page 52-54 of the article.

parenting and the transmission of values to the youth; and death and life beyond, which provides comfort in grief.

Immanuel Adow Obeng also has valuable insights on how Africans should interpret the Bible. He affirms that the Bible should be the supreme authority in African Christianity, which aligns with the views of others. In any case, African theology within the church context is African Christian theology. He advises African hermeneuts to use classical tools, as they will help understand the message "then" before applying it "now." Biblical critical methods require the text to be viewed in its historical setting—for example, the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, which points to intercultural problems "then." Textual criticism will examine the human errors that the text may have suffered during oral transmission and the mistakes in manual copying throughout history. Source criticism, which examines where the writers obtained their material, is useful. A good example is how the Synoptic Gospels tell the same stories, but with variations. There is also form criticism, which attempts to understand the community from which the stories originated. For instance, the Synoptic Gospels could have been more popular or folk literature than literary works. Between the life of Jesus and the writing, oral transmission preserved this information, which, in one way or another, assumed certain forms (paradigms). Tradition-historical criticism deals with blocks of material and tries to trace divergence from the original. On the other hand, reduction criticism does not focus on "mistakes" made in the Synoptic Gospels but on the subtle modifications made to suit the author's purpose.

I have no quarrel with these cross-cultural methodologies for scrutinizing scripture. On their own, they would not be different from modern biblical theology. However, Obeng has a section dealing with the Bible as the

word of God. He states that it is the word of God in the sense that God reveals Himself through the realities of culture. He recommends that African hermeneuts use African idioms, not simply mimic Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek idioms.

In any text, the African context (setting), or in a more applicable case, the situation, has to be taken into account. Respect for a people's culture or a person's situation or circumstances must be studied and understood before applying a text in evangelism or preaching. Poverty, rampant corruption in high places, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, refugee problems, and street families all have their biblical prophetic anecdotes. On a positive note, African beliefs and practices, such as our sense of community, family spirit, and respect for the sacred and life, could be enhanced using the Bible.

Obeng caps his discussion well by stating that biblical criticism and biblical translation require individuals who are well-learned and have sound cultural knowledge. These combinations are rare, but they should be nurtured in our universities and theological institutions, schools, or colleges.

In "From Privatized to Popular Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa," in *The Bible in African Christianity* (Hannah W. Kinoti and John Waliggo, eds.), Laurenti Magesa criticizes biblical interpreters in Africa who believe that biblical hermeneutics is value-free. Universal validity is not possible. The main culprits are the mainline churches and the Catholic Church. To Magesa, exegesis from outside cannot be applied simply because the scholar is high-ranking. Like the others, he commends AICs for being more accommodating as they incorporate economic and social considerations into their theology and church life.

We shall not rewrite the Bible, but it contains all that is needed to free Christianity from the bondage of social,

political, economic, and cultural oppression.⁷⁷ The Bible as the Word of God shall not remain in abstraction. It should be the basis of praxis in out of context or situation; not outside real-life situations. Short of this "what then is meant by the Bible as "Word of God?"⁷⁸ The Bible has to be used to promote life.⁷⁹ Privatization of the Bible is misuse of it. Using the Bible as a justification for denominationalist to preserve status quo by intellectuals, the clergy, or anybody for that matter is wrong.⁸⁰ In sexism, racism, oppressive capitalism and marginalization of various groups (such as women) classes of people "have found safe haven in dominant biblical hermeneutics."⁸¹

When women theologians talk of 'texts of terror,' they are affirming the same point. Misrepresentation of Bible texts to suit certain agendas ignores efforts to uncover apparent contradictions. These apparent contradictions are not real; they are phantoms—figments of imagination meant to further biases in human relations, epitomized by androcentrism or racism. No theologian is seeking a 'new Bible,' but rather a new hermeneutics. One might expect to encounter New Bible Dictionaries, New International Versions (NIV), or other translations like the Living Word or King James Bible, but not 'A New Bible.' These variations reflect the translation efforts aimed at finding relevant/vernacular languages to facilitate informed hermeneutics. A hermeneutics scholar versed in Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Syriac languages would certainly have an advantage in interpreting the Bible, but such a combination is rare. Nevertheless, with good translations like

⁷⁷ Magesa, 26-27.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 28

⁷⁹ Ibid, 28

⁸⁰ Ibid, 29

⁸¹ Ibid, 29

the NIV and a strong understanding of African culture, appropriate hermeneutical presentations are still possible.

Like other theologians in this context, Magesa highlights the issues of poverty and women. Additionally, he stresses the importance of continual interpretation. He explains: 'Continual interpretation is necessary if new socio-political and religious experiences of a people are to be taken into account and incorporated as an essential part of biblical hermeneutics. We do not need a new Bible but a new hermeneutics.'⁸²

In his article, "The Bible and African Theologies" in *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa* (Mary N. Getui, T. Maluleke, Justin Likponh, eds., Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2001, 165-176), Mauleke provides guidance on how an African should interpret the Bible. Tianyiko Maluleke introduces a slightly different angle by considering Africa's geographic and cultural diversity. He advocates for a close relationship between biblical hermeneutics and social hermeneutics. In summary, Maluleke encapsulates the views of other writers in this reading reaction, emphasizing the importance of inculturation theologies, which he equates to cultural relevance. Within the African context, he speaks of a relevant Christology, where Jesus is viewed as an ancestor, elder brother, or mediator. He also commends the use of vernacular translations, an idea that was dear to the late Kwame Bediako.

The reconstruction paradigm, which has become the dominant approach to African theology in the 21st century, stems from what Magesa refers to as continual interpretation. Reconstruction addresses the post-exile, post-independence, and post-apartheid realities, reflecting the new global scenario that followed the Cold War. This new era, characterized by the shift from a multi-polar to a unipolar world, is primarily dominated by the United States, with China in close pursuit. Like the other scholars

⁸² Ibid, 30

discussed in this paper, African Initiated Churches (AICs) are praised for steering biblical interpretation in the right direction. According to Maluleke, the hermeneutic challenges in the African context lie in the distinction between ordinary and trained hermeneuts. He argues that anyone can be considered "ordinary" depending on the context or the task at hand.⁸³ In hermeneutics, Maluleke emphasizes that the trained should read the Bible alongside the ordinary. This approach is philosophical, suggesting that every leader, whether learned or not, is a hermeneut as they seek meaning in a text that is relevant to one's situation, needs, or predicament.

It is clear that all five contributions from six writers (two of them working jointly) present a similar trajectory in Biblical hermeneutics in Africa. Nahashon Ndung'u, a specific case of Akūrinū, an African Independent Church (AIC), demonstrates how useful their approach to gospel enculturation is. They show that, if properly followed, people can live Christian lives where praxeology aligns with doctrine or teachings. The importance of cultural values set the Akūrinū apart from both the colonial administration and Western Christianity, whose witness of the Gospel was grossly inadequate. The Akūrinū went as far as redeeming pneumatology. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinitarian formula, was placed second in line (Father - Holy Spirit - Son) because He is God-active-in-the-world, carrying out the salvific role of sanctification as we await the Parousia. He is our helper. When a believer is born again, the indwelling Holy Spirit empowers a person's life, making corruption, misuse of public funds, and other moral failings unacceptable. One does not become a saint, but a person lives a life without guile.

Nthamburi and Waruta emphasize the importance of cultural context, warning that hermeneuts should be cautious of possible syncretism, as evidenced in the racial theology of South

⁸³ Maluleke, 175

Africa crafted by the Dutch Reformed Church. They also reference the Akūrinū and the Aroti (the "dreamers") who redeemed the Holy Spirit, a neglected person of the Trinity in Western Christianity. They did so by revisiting Joel's prophecies and the Pentecostal experience (Acts 2). Unlike Ndung'u, Nthamburi expands the scope by giving examples of faith healing among the Aladura churches and other spiritual churches on the continent. Like the AICs, Nthamburi affirms that biblical interpretation in Africa should guide people toward a life of wholeness—mental and physical health, as Jesus, the teacher, dealt with all these aspects. He healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, and fed the hungry.

Obeng reminds African hermeneuts to make use of the classical tools in biblical hermeneutics. Once these tools, such as textual criticism or form criticism, are applied, contemporary applications of scripture become feasible. Without these tools, literal applications might lead to uninformed faith that remains within the alien Judeo-culture. Contextualizing biblical texts is crucial.

Laurenti Magesa, on his part, warns against embracing Western biblical interpretations, as they largely reflect the values of a Euro-American worldview. Like the others, he urges a hermeneutics that will foster praxeology. Praxis, as we know, is lacking in African Christianity. This is evident from tragedies like the Rwandan genocide, which killed over 800,000 people in three months, and the post-election violence in Kenya in December 2007 to March 2008, where over 650,000 people were displaced. The question arises: Where was the Church while these atrocities occurred in a country where 80% of the population is classified as Christian? The "love of neighbor" concept is deeply troubling when such events unfold.⁸⁴

Tinyoko Mauleke, on his part, recognizes that the diversity of cultures in Africa may require biblical

⁸⁴ The Number is from the Daily Nation, 15th July 2009

hermeneutics to take this diversity into account. He talks about Christianities and Christologies. Essentially, he expands on what the other five writers are discussing. This prompts me to mention that in her book *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*, Diana B. Stinton addresses issues related to textual relevance.⁸⁵

In this section, Diana discusses contextual theologies, referring to Mercy Oduyoye's call for theologians to speak relevantly to their age and generation, freeing themselves from traditional dogmatic systematic theology and focusing on life issues.⁸⁶ She portrays Jesus as the giver of life, as mediator, as leader, and as a family member—roles that echo African traditional life in general. Diana also writes about Christological praxis in the context of social transformation.⁸⁷

As I conclude this summary, I am inspired by Professor Ukachukwu Chris Manus and the contents of his book, *Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa: Methods and Approaches* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003). In the introduction, he emphasizes reading the Bible from our perspective, especially in light of the cultural crisis Africa has faced due to colonial and missionary legacies.⁸⁸ It is amazing how detailed he is in pioneering the intercultural approach. The fact that a whole book is dedicated to specific biblical texts, citing specific people such as the Igbo and exploring themes like the healing of the leper in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, shows how far African Christianity has come in terms of contextualization, inculturation, relevance in the social

⁸⁵ Diana B. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2004), 40-42.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 41

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 256-258

⁸⁸ *Ibid*

context, and in viewing the gospel as an agent of enhancing life rather than destroying it.

CHAPTER 7

Living Christian Faith amidst New Expressions of Christianity

Within the concept of Christian unity in diversity, there are both physical and spiritual challenges in living a worshipful life in the climate of many faces of Christianity. Until the last few decades before decolonization, the face of the Church was primarily represented by Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, Methodism, Episcopalianism, and Roman Catholicism. African Initiated Churches (AICs) and independent churches were exceptions within mainstream Christianity. Now, however, there are myriads of modes of expression of the Christian faith, each using different biblical verses.

There is also what is referred to as the Church in the Global South, which distinctly differs from expressions of Christianity in Europe and America. Even among classical Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals have emerged in recent times with new expressions of the faith, particularly in the area of miraculous healing. In many cases, they hold special services dedicated to healing, exorcism, and deliverance from evils such as witchcraft. Health and wealth have become commonplace in the prosperity gospel, which has been criticized for adulterating the message of the Gospel.

Amidst all this, the individual believer—and by extension, all Christians—have a model to follow, as enshrined in the supreme law of love. This is a fundamental guide to living a worshipful life (Mark 12:29-31). Love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your

mind and with all your strength.⁸⁹ In this state, you will be a regenerated person, whereby, through this saving faith, one has been born again (John 3:3-8). The new birth, according to Peter, gives us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Similarly, James informs us that through the new birth, Christians become a prized possession. John echoes the same sentiment, stating that believers receive the power to become children of God within the covenant that God pursued and continues to pursue—not through natural descent, but through spiritual birth, which is different from physical birth (John 1:13). Peter reinforces this message, affirming that in the new birth, a believer is born not of perishable seed, but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring (unstoppable) word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

Within this matrix of the new birth, other issues of life—physical and social—find their position in matters such as the use of talents, professionalism, family life, and integrity in day-to-day living in this "fallen world" that Christ came to save, redeem, and reconcile God with humanity. This enhances person-to-person relationships. It is within this context that, though a heavenly event, conversion carries with it faith and repentance, leading people to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord in their lives upon being forgiven (Luke 24:47).

According to Luke, this message of repentance and forgiveness is to be preached to all nations, to be received by faith. Faith, in this context, does not refer to the commonly used notion of "blind faith." The faith implied here is trust in God that enables us to depend on Him because He has revealed Himself in His word and, more so, in all that He has made/created. In this arena, one is justified (declared not guilty), thus obtaining a right legal standing before God. One

⁸⁹ Heart is the center of total personality. It is an element of the soul. The heart carries with it intuition, feeling or emotion.

is adopted as a member of God's family. God's family could be the Church in a large measure, but this also includes fellowship groups, prayer cells, or brethren unions—united not only within a given Church but even in inter-church fellowships. Christians with a common agenda, such as a focus on raising godly families, would be part of such a union. The list is as endless as human activities and relationships.

Praise and worship of God call for a personal relationship with Jesus. A personal relationship is not an option; it is an integral ingredient of living right. It is an essential element of worshipful living. Paul states this strongly: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, RSV). The psalmist, long before the Christian era, immortalized the personal relationship with God. In Psalm 100:3, one has to know who is to be praised and worshiped. He is to be worshiped within his gates—not in any particular place, but in all places (John 4:22) and at all times.

Those who worship the Lord shall do so in spirit and in truth, meaning they are those who have repented and sought forgiveness. They worship the Lord God because He is worthy. In doing so, worship may be expressed in stillness, shouting, or kneeling, as the Spirit may lead and give utterance. There are many reasons why Jehovah (Yahweh) must occupy a central position of praise in an individual's life. Jehovah cannot be displaced from His position as King. He is majestic, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Lord of history, the Provider for nature, and the Caregiver of the needy, for His love and compassion endure forever.

In this book, the cultural mandate and diversity are encouraged. There is a broad analysis of mainline churches and

African Initiated Churches. It also mentions New Religious Movements, independent churches, church ministries, and Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches. These factors affect church unity and witness. The principles of Christian living expressed in this book are set or mirrored in scriptural references. The unity and diversity of the church should be understood within the multiplicity of cultures, as seen in races, geography, climate, and ethnic compositions.

Today, many divisions characterize the church of Christ. The Word of God (the Bible) speaks extensively about division. Unnecessary division should be discouraged. Ephesians 4 contains much teaching on unity in diversity. There are a variety of functions that correspond to the various gifts endowed by God to individuals. The grounds of unity are found in the Trinity—there is one Body, one Spirit, and one God. It should be acknowledged that the person of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity baptizes the individual into the body of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the God-man and the only Savior of the world. There is one faith that facilitates good works. When we are in Christ, we should preserve this unity. The Bible is clear that there should be no lasting bickering among Christians. We cannot all have the same tastes. Although we are one body, there are differences in gifts (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12).

Whatever gift one has, there is no cause for boasting. The major gifts are apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastoral/teaching. In Christian living, we need to use our minds, study the Bible, and equip ourselves with knowledge. The knowledge of truth makes us free (John 8:31). Jesus did not want people to come to Him under any illusion (Luke 14:25ff); He wanted them to count the cost. It is well known that by maneuvering one's psychology, one can change a person's mind. It is possible to bypass rational means. Pavlov's

experiment with dogs is a well-known learning and teaching principle. In some sects, fear and anxiety are used as tools. In some instances, people converted through music and dancing struggle to see the value of being born again when the heightened emotions dissipate in real-life settings. This, however, does not discount the role of the heart (emotions). No! Rather, it is the deliberate use of psychological maneuvers that should be discouraged.

In Scripture, we see that Jesus had high regard for the mind in coming to God (Luke 4:14-22). He frequently referenced Scripture, and the apostles followed a similar approach. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached a sermon based on what was foretold by the prophets, only calling the people to repentance at the end. This method is also evident in Paul's ministry. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul states that he did not use lofty words when bringing the Gospel to the Corinthians but instead preached the factual message of the crucified Jesus. In Acts 19:8ff, we see that Paul spent many hours every day for two years using persuasive arguments to teach about the kingdom of God.

With these observations, let it not be assumed that conversion involves only a change of mind. It also involves the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is essential in the new birth, just as the mind is equally important. Knowledge and discernment are necessary for leading a holy life. Once transformed by the renewal of our minds, our bodies and actions become a living sacrifice acceptable to God (Romans 12:2). Christian witness requires the engagement of our minds, as we interact with fellow human beings who share with God the supreme gift of rationality (Isaiah 1:18 ff). We should have a clear understanding of the messages we present to others, which involves systematic study and awareness of the world in which we live. Additionally, we must be prepared to make an

intelligent defense of our faith (1 Peter 3:15), doing so with gentleness and humility.

Let it be evident that the mind plays a crucial role in living a Christian life. The Bible warns against a faith that is easily swayed by various doctrines. As rational beings, we differ from other creatures in that we possess the ability to reason. This rationality is part of *Imago Dei*—the image of God placed within humanity. Additionally, we have a spiritual nature that enables us to have fellowship with God. God's revelation is rational; He has revealed Himself to humanity in an intelligible way (Psalm 19:1-4). In Romans 12:18-21, we learn that humanity has no excuse for not knowing God, as He has made Himself known through creation—all that He has made. Furthermore, God's revelation in Scripture and in Christ is also rational. Saving faith involves both the mind and the heart. The activity of the mind integrates both faith and religious affections. Faith, therefore, is not mere belief or passive agreement without understanding its implications for one's life and direction. It is not a delusion (Hebrews 11:1-2). In the 21st century, Christianity is lived and expressed among people of different cultures and regions across the globe. Technological advancements have led many to find solace in their possessions, human rights movements, and secular laws that often disregard the religious sphere. Christian practices in the Global North and the Global South often appear discordant. The Global South, in Christian terms, includes Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Churches in these regions find abundant scriptural justification for their emphasis on spiritual warfare and the presence of spiritual evil.⁹⁰ We frequently witness exorcism among Christians in the South, much like in early and medieval expressions of the faith.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 181.

⁹¹ Ibid

It should not be forgotten that during the Dark Ages, witch-hunting was considered a religious practice. While some may discredit the Church in the South for interpreting the Bible literally, there is an equally great danger in over-rationalizing Scripture to fit contemporary lifestyles. To truly live out biblical faith, exegesis and systematic study of Scripture are essential for any Christian who seeks to honor God in His majesty, holiness, and enduring care and compassion.

Through excessive rationalization, material advancement, and scientific inroads into societal life, as seen in communication information technology, the human mind is going beyond the limits of behavior set in the Scripture. The issue of gayism and same-sex marriages is a conflict point in Church life. While Western European, North American, and Canadian Christianity seem lukewarm about the matter, the Church in the Global South is up in arms over allowing gay clergy in the Church. When the U.S. Episcopal Church ordained Gene Robinson, a non-celibate homosexual, as bishop of New Hampshire, the United Kingdom and Canadian Anglicans were warned to this unscriptural stand. Yes, homosexuality has been witnessed since ancient times, but Scripture, both in the Christian Era and in the Old Testament, has condemned it in a forthright manner. Apostle Paul's teaching on this is crystal clear (Rom. 1:26-27). This is why Southern Anglicans and other Christians, in general, see it as a non-issue. During his visit to Kenya in 2015, President Barack Obama was aware that same-sex marriage was an American persuasion among liberals. He appeared content when President Uhuru Kenyatta referred to it as a non-issue in Kenyan society. This liberalism and moral laxity may have been a strong factor that facilitated American President Donald Trump's second-term win in 2024.

In plain thinking, same-sex unions are a fuss—anchored in hedonism, self-gratification of the flesh, and the accompanying moral decadence and self-abuse that lead to hollow, never-ending questions without answers for those deep in the vice. Theoretically, if homosexual behavior is socially accepted and anchored in legal systems, is this not self-annihilation? Is humanity not heading toward self-induced extinction?

Many countries with developed economies are already experiencing aging populations. Countries such as Japan and Germany are facing manpower shortages due to low birth rates. What if these low birth rates were exacerbated by non-productive same-sex marriages? Human resources cannot be manufactured. Even artificial intelligence and robotic science are only enabled by human resources, not the other way around.

As a Christian who aspires to live a worshipful life, in a big or small way, using Scripture to share the Gospel message with those you encounter is honorable. Use the Word of God as found in the Bible. Let us learn Scripture and interpret it correctly for our benefit as well as for others. When the acceptance of homosexuality is based on the claim that Pauline injunctions do not always find room in Church life, such justification is flimsy.

Two illustrations should suffice to help a Christian witness navigate controversial teachings. Firstly, the issue of women preaching in the Church has raised debate in many congregations. It is patently clear that Paul never ruled that women cannot preach. Consider a simple example from parenting: one often hears a mother say, "John (or whoever), don't cry—boys should not cry." Beside John, his sister Mary might hear such a statement. In reality, the mother is not teaching Mary to cry unnecessarily just because she is a girl!

The "John" advice is not meant to affect Mary

negatively. In the same way, those who wish to equate Paul's clothing injunction (the wearing of headscarves) with homosexuality and gayism miss the point. Paul was advising women from two different cultures who had become Christians: those from Hebrew culture and the converted Gentiles (the Greeks). In the Middle East, a woman who appeared in public without a veil was considered to be of loose morals. This was akin to the short dresses often seen in the nightlife of urban areas. That was the cultural situation in Corinth.

Among the Greeks, this thinking did not apply. Both sexes worshipped with uncovered heads; although, women did cover their heads at other times. Roman men and women alike covered their heads during religious rites. What prompted the need for Christian women to cover their heads is clarified by some notes on the issue from the *New Bible Commentary*:

It needs to be remembered that one particular problem was that the Christian meeting, the ekklesia, had a secular counterpart in the governing body of the city. That meeting was normally held in the theatre. When a Christian meeting was held in a private home, where a woman had authority, she did not cover her head.

Therefore, the veil issue, seen against its liberal application today, should in no way be compared to attempting to take homosexuality lightly among Christians and in society in general. The Bible does not only condemn homosexuality in isolation. There are many texts that condemn heterosexual promiscuity in equal measure.⁹²

⁹² (i) Faithfulness in marriages is taught in scripture in details (I Corinthians Chapter 7)

(ii) Scripture that disapproves homosexuality. Romans 1:24-32, I Timothy 1:9-11, I Corinthians 6: 9-10, Jude 1:7, Judges 19:22- 23, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, I Kings 15:22, I Kings 14:24, 1 Kings 22:46 and 2 Kings 23:7.

Let it be clarified that while Paul's specific instructions may have been cultural (such as women covering their heads in worship), the principles behind them are timeless: respect for one's spouse, reverence and appropriateness in worship, and a life centered on God. Paul instructed women who were not wearing head coverings to do so—not because it was a scriptural command, but to prevent division within the congregation over a petty issue that would only distract people from Christ.⁹³

It should be recalled that until a few decades ago, men and women in Kenyan churches sat in different rows. Women sat on the left side, while men occupied the pews on the right side upon entering a house of worship. All the above explanations aim to highlight the fact that liberals who advocate for gayism, sodomy, lesbianism, or homosexuality in general while belittling Pauline theology on the issue are entirely mistaken. Their argument is as follows:

The New Testament was written in a society that accepted slavery and condemned homosexual behavior on a moral par with adultery, theft, and idolatry, and since the regulations provided in the text about both matters were thoroughly culture-specific, they need not bind modern believers. Few Christian denominations today enforce the detailed rules that Paul pronounced about how men and women should wear their hair during services, though the passage

(iii) Though not entirely unknown in Traditional Africa homosexual behavior has been vehemently condemned by African leaders among them President Mugabe of Zimbabwe and former President Moi of Kenya. Freedom of speech and Human rights compounded by abandonment of traditional values and beliefs have opened debate on validity of homosexuals and lesbians in African societies (Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, Hippo Books, Zondervan, Nairobi, 2008), 304-305

⁹³ Life Application Bible, 1178

appears in First Corinthians more prominently than his remarks on homosexuality.⁹⁴

Homosexuality as explained above is a perversion. Other than self-debasement in the light of the wonderfully made human body, the practice is valueless to those who fall into it. From the point of view of passing the genes and continuation of human race, it is futile. It is irrational and ignores the New Testament prohibitions on homosexuality. Why? If one wants to read the Bible for its worth, one needs to look at a string of biblical passages from Genesis to Revelation. On homosexuality Adam and Eve was a perfect couple. They were to populate the earth and dominate the earth in way of stewarding the resources therein.⁹⁵ Sodom and Gomorrah were decimated due to the prevalent sodomy. In a way to avert sodomy, Lot found it expedient to offer his daughters to sodomites. The Hebraic genealogy, including that of Jesus Christ as son of David traces itself to Ruth and Boaz. There is beauty in sharing procreation with God through the passing of genes down the history lane. This is the reasonable way to see linkage in the absolute guide in sexuality.

This chapter attempts to demonstrate that supreme love for God and love for others as "self" can resolve many ethical and behavioral dilemmas. However, the self (you and me) should not be elevated to the place of God. For example, self-gratification through material possessions or pride in scientific advancements can pervert life. The command to "love thy neighbor as thyself" suggests that while self-love should not lead to self-centeredness, self-denigration is equally discouraged.

There are many real-life examples that affirm our

⁹⁴ Jenkins, *The New Faces of the Christianity*, 13

⁹⁵ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, Hippo Books, Zondervan, Nairobi, 2008), 304-305

belonging to God. For instance, committing suicide does not reflect love for oneself, as we do not belong to ourselves (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In the Christian era, the use of toxic substances such as tobacco, alcohol abuse, and narcotics deprives individuals of good stewardship over their bodies. Similarly, dietary habits involving foods and drinks detrimental to health are inconsistent with a Christian's commitment to a worshipful life.

To understand God's absolute morality, we must examine biblical revelation through both the Old and New Testaments as a progression of ethical teachings. Topics such as polygamy, sexism, slavery (servitude), racism, child marriages, homosexuality, the ethics of war and violence, and domestic violence require careful consideration. Additionally, complex issues such as rape, incest, HIV/AIDS, and access to medical services challenge anyone who aspires to live a life that pleases and reveres God. Witchcraft is another phenomenon extensively addressed in both the Old and New Testaments.

As a born-again Christian, one should not engage in polygamy (whether as a man or woman). While polygamy was practiced in Old Testament times, we recognize that God (Yahweh) has dealt with humanity progressively, ultimately ushering us into the Christian era. The gospel writers recorded what they heard Jesus teach on the subject, and Jesus disapproved of polygamy. The apostolic teachers and early Christian fathers (and mothers) upheld monogamy as the intended model for marriage.

Similarly, issues of marriage, divorce, and remarriage remain relevant in Christian life. St. Mark's gospel disallowed divorce (Mark 10:1-12), while Matthew, addressing Jewish leadership, permitted divorce only on the grounds of infidelity. For those aspiring to live a worshipful life guided by the Holy Spirit, there is a strong warning to avoid this familiar pitfall. As

born-again Christians—whether pastors, Christian leaders, husbands, or wives—mutual respect is essential in both marriage and church life. Men and women alike are called to total fidelity. In the kingdom of God, righteousness must pervade all aspects of life. In this kingdom, there is no distinction between male and female—all are one in Christ.

On modern slavery (servitude), there should be no oppression of one another. Paul addressed this when he sent Onesimus back to his former master, Philemon—not as a mere servant but as a brother in Christ. As people aspiring to live in God’s kingdom here on earth, we must be mindful of how we treat those who serve us, including house helps, gardeners, and herdsmen. They deserve honorable treatment. Likewise, those employed by Christians should also uphold integrity and be faithful workers. The Bible provides clear guidelines on this matter.

Racism is a deep-rooted social evil. In the past, it fueled slavery and apartheid. Today, modern slavery has its origins in historical slavery, which many assume to be a relic of the past. However, racial slurs, ethnic discrimination, and clannism continue to impact society negatively. Every believer in Christ should uphold the Lord’s commandment of love. In politics, our choices should be guided by policies that foster economic and social development, not tribalism or ethnic favoritism. Integrity in resource management should be the hallmark of our political decisions, including voting for leaders (Proverbs 18:18). May political candidates be truthful and free from deception!

Child marriages and the dowry system, often linked to cattle rustling in parts of Kenya (Baringo, Samburu West, Pokot, and Turkana counties), result in unnecessary loss of life. In countries like South Sudan, cattle raids among the Dinka and Nuer communities frequently escalate into violent conflicts. As

Christians, especially those who are born again, we must reject such practices. The church in these regions should be actively engaged with local communities, teaching them to abandon these harmful traditions. Encouragingly, this issue has significantly diminished in Kajiado and Narok counties, proving that change is possible! The Church must continue to spread the Gospel of peace through dedicated evangelism.

Early marriages also devalue the girl child, who is often seen as a source of wealth rather than as an individual deserving of education and opportunities. Many girls are married off after undergoing circumcision, limiting their potential. Those within the church, particularly among pastoral communities, should set an example in eradicating this harmful practice. By doing so, they will truly embody the values of God's kingdom here on earth while preparing for Christ's second coming.

For young men and women who are born again, understanding the ethics of war, violence, and human dignity is crucial. Some may find themselves serving in law enforcement, the army, or the air force. We live in a fallen world, and as Christians, we must carefully consider how to respond to violence—whether through peaceful means or, in extreme cases, resistance against evil. This is particularly important for Christian leaders, who must be peacemakers, as God has called them to be. However, in times of war, moral dilemmas arise. Even in battle, there are human rights standards that must be upheld, which is why war crimes and crimes against humanity are prosecuted. This leads to a profound and complex question with no simple answer: Can a Christian ever participate in war?

Unusual issues such as rape, incest, abortion, and the ethics associated with these incidents require preachers, fellowships, and other Christian formations to group study and understand them. As Christians, we always ask the Lord, "Do

not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Victims of rape and incest require Godly sympathy and abundant grace, even when they contemplate abortion if such incidents pose danger to their psychological well-being. The Bible makes no reference to abortion, but there is one Old Testament passage dealing directly with the life of a fetus—a law concerning a pregnant woman who accidentally loses her baby when caught between two fighting men (Exodus 21:22-23). If there is a miscarriage, death was the answer. If not much harm is done, restitution would be made, with the husband playing a major role in determining the restitution.

In Psalm 139:13-15, God affirms in His word His deep concern for the unborn. The Old Testament thus affirms a fact held by people from many cultures of the world—that conception is a gift of God. He fashions the baby in the womb and plans his or her days. God's care for the unborn begins here. As Christians, born again and cared for by God, there is a dilemma in many minds regarding children conceived through violence. If the pregnancy is not terminated, there is lasting trauma. Where abortion is carried out when the life of the mother is at risk, there is not much lasting problem. However, there are psychological complications of therapeutic abortion.

So, a Christian who falls victim needs to know that psychological or psychiatric disturbances occur when abortion is induced, but they are marked, severe, or persistent in only a minority (approximately 10%) of women. Group support on a crisis resolution framework, in circumstances cited above, agrees that termination of such a pregnancy itself is therapeutic.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ "Inadequate Pro-abortion Counseling and Decision Conflicts Predictors of Subsequent Relationship Difficulties and Psychological Stress in men and women
(i) Traumatology March 1, 2010 16:16-30 Abstract PDF

Domestic violence by either men or women—although it is mostly perpetrated by men—should not occur in Christian homes. These homes, shared by believers, should be models of society where Christ is represented, as He commanded that all live in love while exercising all other talents. Love and respect should pervade the husband-wife union. Last but not least are strikes and medical services. Strikes in medical services are isolated from other labor disputes because of the uniqueness of the healing ministry. Jesus healed the sick on a Sabbath. When accused of doing so, He asked a pertinent question: *Is it right to harm or to do good on a Sabbath? To save life or to lose it?* A born-again Christian doctor is likely to find himself or herself between a hard service and a rock when such a strike is called in an industrial dispute. In Kenya, doctors went on strike for 100 days in 2016. Many other strikes have happened since then, as observed before and in December 2024. In other industrial disputes, non-participation would be inordinate, but not in the area of life and death, where lives could have been saved.

Without displaying professional bigotry, if doctors' remuneration is within close ranks with other professionals in a country, there should be an orientation toward saving lives. Biomedicine shares with God's grace in upholding the days that each person was ordained by God at conception. So, let medics be wary of this. Any government should also bear this in mind when determining policies regarding medical personnel salaries and allowances, particularly those associated with the risks of contracting infectious diseases in the course of their duties. This does not mean that they should be overly remunerated, but their salaries should be expeditiously placed in line with those of military personnel, who also risk their lives in the line of duty, especially during times of war. It is no small

(ii) Psychiatric outcomes following medical and surgical abortions, Hum Reprod March 1, 2007 22:878-884 Abstract

sacrifice for medical personnel to put their lives at risk when handling diseases such as Ebola, HIV/AIDS, or COVID-19.

The case for nurses who participated in strikes in late 2016 and mid-2017 should be evaluated by their employer and among themselves using a life-saving criterion above any other parameter. It is socially perturbing when a strike lasts for months, especially during a contested presidential election. It is easily seen as industrial blackmail! It becomes industrial coercion, which is outrightly wrong.

Nevertheless, there is a need for medical professionals to agree with Kuniyop when he concludes his chapter on strikes and medical services: *"One of the problems industrial action raises for medical staff is the failure to treat patients during strikes. Failure to treat a sick person for the sole purpose of improving one's own welfare is selfish and against the Hippocratic Oath and its promise to do 'no harm or injustice' to patients. We need to remember the question the Bible asks: 'What good will it be for a man (sic) if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul!' (Matthew 16:26). A general strike may enable one to gain a good salary and an improved lifestyle (material benefits), but one may lose one's professional soul."*⁹⁷

Now to the Governments and society at large, let all and Sundry, take note that there should be limits and delimits in sharing what has been collected in taxes. The political class—parliamentarians, senators, governors, and top managers in echelons of leadership—have had a propensity to over-enumerate themselves. As salaries are harmonized, with differences commensurate with corporate responsibility in terms of skill and the duty placed on individuals to steer the

⁹⁷ This pronouncement is not exclusive to medical practice. It is applicable to all areas of human life such as, politics, teaching, responsible agricultural practices, livestock keepers, food processing, etc. all are called up to uphold best practices

ship of the state and its maintenance—LET US ALL BE FAIR TO ONE ANOTHER. Tax exemption for certain citizens on the platform of “*we can do it through legislation*” is selfish and illogical.

In every country, and more so here in Kenya, there is enough room, food, and money if one is content with what one labors for. If you are more blessed and have extra to share with the less endowed, share it out. Be philanthropic. Storing excessive wealth for your sons and daughters does not align with the notion of abundant life during one’s lifetime or even after passing on. In most cases, wealth left in this manner creates unending family feuds and endless court battles, sometimes involving contention over a will. Every chapter, every sentence in this book points to one basic principle: we are called upon to live a worshipful life—a life that pleases God, a life that is relationally useful to others, a life that cares for nature, which God has intrinsically placed in His creation (Psalm 104), and indeed a life that mirrors the *Imago Dei* that we share with God through the rationality bestowed upon us in the context of a sound mind.

Repeated choices mold our habits. In turn, habits form our character. Character then defines who we are within a social or professional setting. As human beings, we cannot afford to be amoral. Why? Because we cannot continue watching those around us suffer and remain neutral. Commenting on Pharaoh’s hardened heart, which yielded to no plague so as to let the Israelites leave Egypt, Motyer gives the following advice, which holds universal value: “*We are forcefully reminded that choices are both a privilege and a price of being human. Our privilege is that of being responsible, recognizing moral values, being called to make responsible choices, and being given the opportunity and obligation to live in the light of the foreseeable consequences*

of our actions."⁹⁸

In Christianity, Judaism, or Islam, whatever an individual does in this life should have a reference to God. Believers in these three faiths aspire to end up in paradise. The heavenly reward, so highly prized by these religions, comes with a price tag. Motyer puts it lucidly: *"The price we pay is that every choice, for good or ill, goes to fashioning our characters, and whether in the long or short term—or both—makes us answerable to the Judge of all the earth."*⁹⁹ Amen!

Ecumenism is an open channel for understanding these different strands of faith. In ecumenical conferences, there is no reason why Presbyterians, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Baptists, Lutherans, Congregationalists, Evangelical ministries, African Initiated Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and others cannot come together to examine where differences arise. A united church, founded on diversity yet centered on the Holy Spirit, will effectively witness salvation in Jesus Christ to other faiths such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and even African Traditional Religion. The tenets of African Traditional Religion are often misrepresented by groups such as *Kiama Kiama* (the Council of Gĩkũyũ Elders), who may not realize that in the Christian era (CE or AD), the sacrificial killing of goats, rams, or bulls is no longer necessary. The unity Christ prayed for, as recorded in John 17, is of paramount importance in Christian life and witness.

In conclusion, the ecclesiastical strands or pillars articulated in this text form the DNA that supports Christ's High Priestly prayer (John 17) and places it in the right perspective. This ensures that the Great Commission is carried

⁹⁸ Alex Motyer, *The Bible speaks Today, The message of Exodus*, England, (IVP, Leister, 2005), 122

⁹⁹ Ibid

out by both mainstream churches and New Religious Movements without much ado. Through this unity, holy religious affections will flourish, and evangelism will be propelled forward smoothly.

Master Jesus Christ said, "The wheat fields are ripe, but the harvesters are few" (Matt 9:37-38). The combine-harvester analogy should inspire both mainline churches and African Initiated Churches to position themselves as cogs in the harvesting strategy. The grain—the people—needs to be harvested into the church for discipleship and growth as Christians. Let us not forget the spiritual pitfalls that the church went through in Europe before the Reformation, and let us embrace the revivalism that has been experienced, such as the East African Revival and Vatican II (1962-65), with its huge contribution to biblical spirituality. The Protestant Reformation dehorned ecclesiastical bigotry, as seen in the Inquisition. The subtle awakening in East Africa led to the rise of new religious movements, churches, and ministries, such as Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) and the ICC (International Christian Centre, based in South C, Nairobi), which is an offshoot of Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) Bethel Church, whose origin was the Limuru Evangelistic Team. Over the last forty years, these ministries have grown into credible African Initiated Churches (AIC). CITAM, a ministry started by Pastor Dennis White, has adopted African expressions in the Christian faith.

In his book *African Christian Worship Today* (available on Xania Digital Bookstore app), the author strongly advocates for African churches to adopt an African worldview in worship. He has clearly explained that missionary-established churches are just one part of the Church of Christ. In the early 1970s, Prof. Mbiti noted that over five thousand such sects or churches existed. Four decades later, they are

myriads—all trying to express the Christian faith from an African perspective. This is the current position. It is, therefore, futile to belabor the point that just as a combine harvester is able to gather all the grain, later using the chaff as hay once it is baled, all should heed the Savior's call to unite and build the Church, whose position is the cornerstone. No individual believer, whether a pastor, a bishop, or in the papacy, can take that pivotal role. The ecumenical spirit and mutual recognition is the supreme witness that all are called to embrace in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

CHAPTER 8

The Imperative Type-Theology

Theology approach in preaching or evangelism should be revamped. There is an obvious application of the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, seen as a precursor to the salvation of humankind from deprivation and decay (sin) through the cross. It is also easy to see Christians as children of Abraham by faith. At times, issues such as Samson and Delilah are easily applied in Christian teachings, just as it is easy to talk about Naomi as a prototype of a model daughter-in-law. However, a cardinal issue, such as Christ in the book of Genesis and other references concerning the incarnation, requires much scrutiny. For example, sermons during the Christmas season need their parallels in the Old Testament. Without the Old Testament, there cannot be the New Testament. The Old Testament is the *Gatûrũ ka ũhoro* (the origin of the original matter).

The Old Testament is the “enclosed New Testament” and can only be understood through Type-Theology, which looks at the whole story of the Jewish people and their happenings as precursors to the Christian faith. In essence, a type is a person or thing in the New Testament that has a parallel in the Old Testament. Many laws and sacrifices, as seen in Leviticus and other stories, were precursors to the New Testament reality. The sacrifice for atoning sin was a foreshadowing of the Messiah and His sacrificial death that

would redeem humankind from death and decay, occasioned by the disobedience of God through one man, Adam.

Adam was tempted and succumbed to the devil's trickery. The second Adam, Jesus Christ, was tempted in the wilderness and came out victorious. Abel was the first man to suffer for righteousness. Job also suffered, although he was righteous. Joseph suffered unjustly, but God exalted him in many ways. He saved his brothers and family for about 400 years while they dwelt in Egypt. Moses, as a prophet and leader, took the lead in saving the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. This event became a typology of Christ saving humanity from the depravity occasioned by sin that pervaded the fallen world.

The Passover Lamb (as seen in the Exodus event) typifies Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The bronze serpent on a pole brought healing from snake bites, just as Christ on the cross brought and continues to bring healing and salvation through His resurrection and ascension. Now seated at the right hand of God the Father, He is preparing a place for the redeemed and interceding for us. Let us now look at specific examples concerning the incarnation story.

In Genesis 3:15, as Eve is chastened for eating the forbidden fruit, we are informed that through her seed (the incarnate God-man) salvation would come.

In the Book of Daniel, Chapter 7:13-14, a vision of the Messiah, or Son of Man, comes in the clouds of heaven. In Chapter 9:24-27, the exact moment in history when the Jewish Messiah would present Himself to the Jewish people is pinpointed.

Zephaniah Chapter 3 gives a bright future for Jerusalem. This is in tandem with Luke, who, after careful research, took it upon himself to write a treatise for the Roman

ruler Theophilus, which is labeled as a joy-filled musical, with the birth of Jesus being something that was brewing on Earth (Devotional Bible Study, page 1875).

Isaiah Chapter 9:1-7 (To us a child is born) predicted that the Messiah would come from Galilee. "A son is given" (vs 6). He is a wonderful counselor. The government of righteousness would be upon His shoulders, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. Isaiah Chapters 40 to 60 lay bare the Messiah, the suffering servant. Early in His ministry, Jesus quoted Luke 4:18-19 and continued, "Today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:20-21).

Jeremiah 31:31-38 unveils the new covenant, whereby the laws would no longer be written on tablets of stone, but in the hearts of men and women.

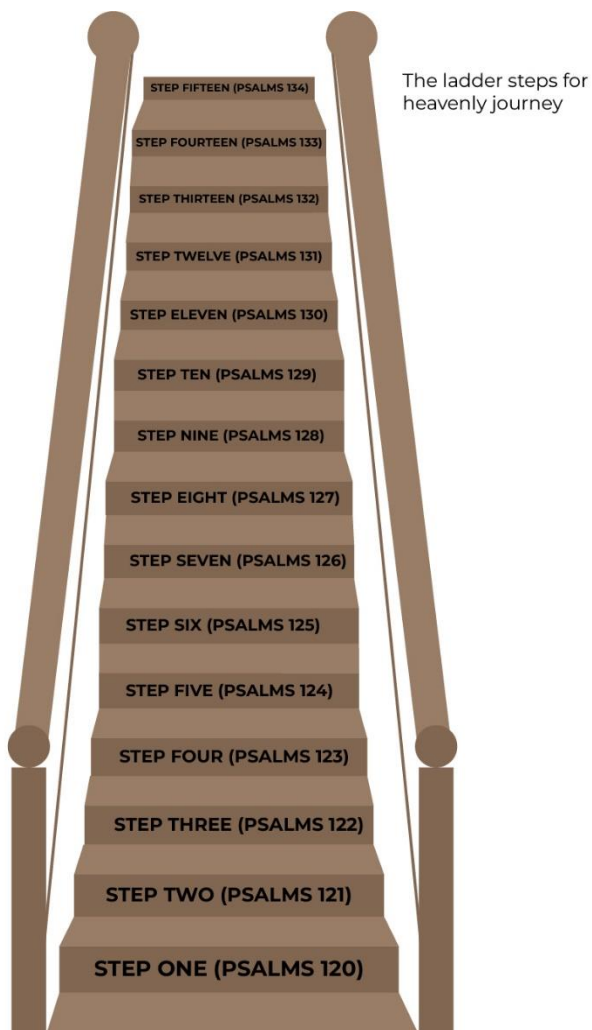
Ezekiel Chapter 34 resonates squarely with Jesus's declaration in John Chapter 10 that He is the Good Shepherd, who His sheep should listen to.

Micah, a minor prophet, states clearly that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Ephrathah) – Micah 5:1-5.

In Reformed Theology, corporate scripture readings in church often include passages or stories from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, with the message in the New Testament being seen in the light of the Old Testament. When the message in the New Testament is understood through the lens of the Old Testament, it helps to build the faith in God, who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus preached Shalom (peace), which implies righteousness, justice, fellowship, wholeness, and harmony in life. The Old Testament is not just a book to be set aside when preparing sermons. Indeed, it contains all spiritual nourishment.

To illustrate this point, let us look at the Psalms of Ascents, Psalm 120 to Psalm 134. I invite the reader to envision that we are climbing up fifteen steps for a heavenly journey,

illustrating the importance of type-theologizing in order to bring the reality of God's revelation through the written Word in the form of a library!



Ascents in the Bible refers to steps as well as Christian pilgrimage through life into glory (Psalms 120-134)

Step 1 (Ps. 120): Life is at times stressful I call upon the name of the Lord when in distress.

Step 2 (Ps. 121): Lift up your eyes to the hills; you realize your help comes from the Lord not from the Mountain.

Step 3 (Ps. 122): Rejoice with those who tell you to go to the house of the Lord with them.

Step 4 (Ps. 123): Look to the Lord in his throne in Heaven. Be like a slave who looks at the hand of his master or a maid who looks at the hand of her mistress.

Step 5 (Ps. 124): Unless the Lord stays with us, we can easily be swept away. He thwarts all attacks.

Step 6 (Ps. 125): Full Trust in the Lord (Jehovah)—be like Mt. Zion which cannot be shaken. The Lord will surround you in all ways.

Step 7 (Ps. 126): Like those who returned from Exile, restoration of humanity in Christ is assured. A ransomed soul by Grace at times appear as a dream But it happens!

Step 8 (Ps. 127): Let us allow God to build our houses (homes); otherwise, our labor will be in vain.

Step 9 (Ps. 128): Blessed are they who fear the Lord—who walk in his ways—will eat of their labor, and will have fruitful wife with sons and daughters as olive shouts.

Step 10 (Ps. 129): You may be oppressed but the enemy's victory is a No!

Step 11 (Ps. 130): Out of depths (devil's traps) cry to the Lord and he will hear you/me. Wait for Him expecting as the watchman longs for the morning.

Step 12 (Ps. 131): Don't be haughty—be patient with God's providence.

Step 13 (Ps. 132): On behalf of David the author pleads for David to be remembered concerning Epharatha (Nazareth where the ANNOINTED ONE would be born as put in Micah. 5:1-5

Step 14 (Ps. 133): People of God living in unity is pleasant, enriching like oil spilling on Aaron's beard is likened to moisture from Mt. Hermon and falling on Mt. Zion.

Step 15 (Ps. 134): Whatever principle, teaching or affirmation is fished out of the rest of Psalms of Ascent by the time you reach Psalm 134—you will have qualified as a servant of the Lord who ministers by night in the House of the Lord.

NB: Ascents in the Bible refers to both steps and the Christian pilgrimage through life into glory. In type-theology, it is believed that the 15 Psalms are representative of the fifteen steps leading up to the Temple in Jerusalem (before its destruction by Emperor Titus) for worship and atonement for sins, the pilgrim songs sang one by one—whatever principle, teaching, or affirmation summarized above, you are ready to vote YEAH or NAY on whether we should use New Testament and Old Testament texts (readings) more often than is currently practiced in our churches. Slighting Old Testament texts in evangelism or preaching is like trying to read the Epistles (letters) without the knowledge contained in the Book of Acts of the Apostles. Take a minute and try to read the letter to the Romans without knowledge of how the church spread, the tribulations, and the embrace as it spread. Acts is the “linking book” that connects the four Gospels to part TWO of the New Testament!

While Psalm 134 (very short, with only three verses) talks about the future city where humanity will dwell with God, as also spelled out in Hebrews 13:4, all the other 14 Psalms introduce themes of: repentance, God's presence, God's mercy, God's help, God's goodness, God's sovereignty, and seeking God alone as a source of all joy. (The joy of the Lord is my strength is a good tune to hum in a meditational mood.) As stated above, the peace (Shalom) that Jesus pronounced upon

His disciples—"Peace I give you" (Luke 19:42, 24:36; John 20:19, 20:21, and 20:26) carries the heavy weight of righteousness, justice, fellowship, wholeness, and harmony. It is important to note the parallelism, the cohesion, and the unity of the teachings in the Psalms of Ascent, which symbolize the climb or walk up the mountain of life in our pilgrimage.

The New Testament records extensive quotes from Psalm 69. In John 15:25, just like David, Christ cries that they hated Him without cause. Romans 15:3 echoes David's cry, in reference to Christ, that "the insults of those who hate You have fallen on me." John 19:28 fulfills the scripture when Christ pronounces, "I am thirsty," after which a sponge was soaked and put to His lips. Matthew 27:34 notes that when Christ was offered wine mixed with gall, He refused to drink it. Romans 11:9 brings into focus the remnants and future salvation of Israel. Just as David faced hostility from his enemies, so it was with Christ, who endured hostility, as seen in Matthew 27:27-31; 39-44 and Mark 14:50.

POSTSCRIPT

Charismatism and Pentecostalism should not be equated with the prosperity gospel, which is so pervasive among neo-Pentecostals. Emphasis on the words, "The Bible says..." regarding getting rich or getting healed should be evaluated with biblical judgment in the light of other references in the Bible. Cross-referencing is of paramount importance. Biblical prosperity verses should be studied and cross-referenced in order to distinguish between reality and chasing phantoms.

For instance, Proverbs 12:11 tells us that hard work leads to success. It says that if you prepare your land, plant, and weed, you will have plenty of food. But those who chase dreams without working lack judgment; they are void of understanding, as only a fool idles away his time. Indeed, the Revised Standard Version puts it bluntly: "If you till the land, you will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits has no sense."

This is why chapter one is clear on reading the Bible for its full value, and a sample exegesis is presented on the book of Jude, which was written to his readers "to earnestly contend for the faith against ungodly teachers who penetrated the church and were promoting immoral behavior and false teachings that denied the Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3). Several examples can be given in simplicity—not to repudiate, but to caution against some traits found in the prosperity gospel within neo-Pentecostalism.

The chapter on African Initiated Churches and their missiological contribution to evangelism should be fully acknowledged. Yahweh (Jehovah), the Lord of hosts, is a promise-keeping God (Ex. 3:17). He is the God of power and sufficient resources (Ex. 30:3). He is the God who performs miracles, as seen in the Exodus event; the crossing of the Red

Sea and the catastrophic vanishing of Pharaoh's army is a classic example. The provision of manna and quails is another stupendous happening. Abraham was blessed and became very rich, but in the mix-up of life, at one stage, he had to flee to Egypt due to famine.

Right at creation, the blissful life in Eden was disrupted by the sin of disobedience. Adam and Eve engaged in tilling the land for food. The incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension into glory became an act of redemption. In His life on earth, Jesus did not promise heaven on earth. Apostle Paul exhorted believers to be industrious, putting an injunction on lazy brethren: if one does not work, he/she should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10-13).

The New Testament borrows the Old Testament stance that generosity (social responsibility) should be prioritized since the poor will always be with us (Matt. 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8, Luke 14:11). Therefore, a church that promises affluence for all needs to rethink its stance on this prosperity premise.

On tithes, offerings, and thanksgiving, one finds that the 10% tithe scale is enhanced in the New Testament. Tithe is meant to maintain the clergy, as they were intermediaries between God and people. In the New Testament, Jesus' mission was funded by His followers. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and others followed Jesus and supported His ministry from their own means (Luke 8:1-3).

During apostolic times, cheerfulness and a generous heart became the mode of giving (1 Cor. 16:1-4). The resources given are primarily to effect the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations. Evangelism is the ultimate goal. Soul-winning has been overshadowed by scaling blessings on the amount of money you give, with a well-crafted call of "planting the seed."

With the above information, it is apt to make some conclusions by giving a biblical admonition and an ecumenical counsel without picking a bone with prosperity gospel advocates. Let us now look at some theological notions as popularly applied:

- i. Economic empowerment biblical verses could easily be misplaced or misunderstood regarding what the Bible says, such as the assertion that "the first key to prosperity is giving." It is sad to listen to sermons directed to listeners in the form of motivational speaking, all in the guise of receiving more money from the congregants. "The more you give, the more you will receive" is a clarion call among the neo-Pentecostals (Paul Gifford, Ghana's New Christianity, Pentecostalism in a Globalizing Africa Economy, Hurst and Company, London, 1988, p. 4).
- ii. Finance and affluence are key messages. For example, during King Asa's reform (II Chr. 15), Winners Chapel interprets success, cited in verse 15, as financial success, equating common service with financial success. Titles such as "Prosperity is my Identity" and "Prosperity is my Heritage" are based on Proverbs 10:22 (Paul Gifford, Ghana's New Christianity, p. 57).

In Kenya, stickers reading "I am a winner" are found on the cars of Winners Chapel adherents. In some church ministries, mostly co-run by husband and wife, services (sermons) are held every day of the week, especially during midday and in the evenings. At times, followers get fatigued, and attendance dwindles. Those AICs that have adopted church administration mirrored on church government, as in mission-established

congregations, are more conscious of gospel delivery more wholesomely. The Deliverance Church, The Bethel Church, Kenya Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya have made a great impact on evangelism and spiritual formation among their members. They have energized music/praise in mission-established churches.

On the "fear of losing members to these churches," mainline churches have embraced contemporary music. In both urban and rural areas, churches such as the House of Grace, Nairobi Chapel, Victory in Christ Church, Kenya Holy Ghost Church, the Bethel Church of Africa, Kenya Assemblies of God, and even the Africa Independent Pentecostal Church have reached the rural folk in a big way. Christianity is alive and kicking in rural villages. Most of them have mid-week prayers out there. Social morality has been enhanced through this phenomenon. Personal salvation in Christ continues to impact many lives. As stated above, a saved person allows the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to ubiquitously practice the law of love: "Love God with all your heart... and love your neighbor as yourself." Unless one allows bloating due to sin, matters of living move as the digestive system works on the food we eat. We eat oblivious of what is happening. Digestion goes on unhindered. This is a model we need to aspire to as we translate our beliefs into practices, as the book of James exhorts us to do good work. In so doing, there is no contradiction from the Pauline doctrine that we are saved by faith and faith alone, as works are a by-product of the faith.

My final word is this: God has availed all resources in the air, on the land, under the ground, and deep in the earth for us humans to work on for our living – in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Each person is to embrace "work" as a gift from God, both on an individual level and on national and international stages. Miracles happened in both Old and New

Testament times; they happen today. Too much emphasis on wealth in all forms can make one lose one's soul. Wealth can easily translate into mammon. If a person hedges one's being (soul, heart, and mind) on possessions and the gratification of the flesh, the biblical story of the foolish rich man comes in handy. All Christians, all believers, are exalted to accept with grace the image of God in us by total association with Christ, assisted by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We, all true worshippers of God, as we long for the eschatological dimension of salvation after justification by grace and faith, must live within confines where the necessities of life—food, shelter, clothing, education, security, good infrastructure, and employment—are available. Limiting factors to these provisions, such as other vices, will have to be tackled. All disciples of Christ, in mainline churches, traditional independent churches, Pentecostal/charismatic congregations, should look to the combined harvester image and the joined hands at the inner cover of this book as the image in praxis.

The big brother mentality in mainstream/mission-established churches should cease. The charismatics are not robbing our children from our churches. They are simply adopting the African way of life, as seen in vibrant worship modes. They are offering a shoulder for the youth to lean on in this age, where calamities such as HIV/AIDS, loose family ties, secularism, and evasive traditional African communalism flood their minds. Emphasis is on the salvation of the soul, and all that goes with preaching will be much more meaningful if directly related to the immediate needs of African individuals and communities here and now, at the beginning of the 21st century.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Grace Wamae, Theuri M. Mathew, *Ecls Quest for Integrity in Africa* (Nairobi, Action Publishers, 2003), p. 124

GLOSSARY

- i. Literary
 - a. Ecclesiastical: from the ecclesia (Ekklesia) ancient Greece for gathering of citizens a city—scripture simply—"church" or assembly.
 - b. Strand: a thin thread twisted around each other to make a string or a strong rope. In the book single issues, namely, reading the Bible soundly, a strong sense of Exegesis awareness, recognizing missiological exploits of African Initiated Churches, African Church in Diaspora and Ecumenism would implement Christ High priestly prayer in Gospel of John Chapter 17.
 - c. Prosperity gospel: misrepresentation of prosperity many varies Bible Verses and leading people into supporting a not-so-sound doctrine by a narrow view of what wealth is. The road map to abundant/rich life stated in John 10:10 is not merely being rich (Ct the Richman parable but was labeled as a fool)
 - d. Exegesis: critical explanation or interpretation of a text of scripture
 - e. Biblical hermeneutics: study of the principles of interpretation concerning the books of the Bible
 - f. Lexical data: this contains structured information about words and are usually available on line.
 - g. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) is the molecule that carries genetic material (information) for the development of an organism. DNA is made of two linked strands that wind around each other to resemble a twisted ladder, a shape known as a double helix. In this books' context there are six strands twisted together.

- ii. Doctrines/Visions
 - a. Arianism: teaching that Jesus as Son of God was created by God (negating the sound doctrine that in the beginning the Word was God, and that nothing was created without Him (John 1:1-5) It was propagated by a presbyter (Church elder) called Arius in the 4th century AD
 - b. Monophysite: the teaching that Christ's nature remains altogether divine and not human even though he had taken an earthly and human body with its cycle of birth, life and death.
 - c. Dyophysite: the teaching that accepts the two natures of Christ are truly human and truly God.
 - d. Monasticism: a way of life in religion as in the life of monks and nuns. Asceticism is a distinguishing mark.
 - e. Evangelical Enterprise: first was the awakening of the Euro-American Churches in the 19th and early 20th century to send missionaries outside their domicile in Europe and North America. Later in the early 1960s African Evangelistic Enterprise was founded by Michael Cassidy-spread Gospel in many cities in Africa.
 - f. Rhetorical exegesis of the scripture: a critical effort to see the authors argument and the impact it has on the readers (audience)
 - g. Dialectical Exegesis: seeks to harmonize different interpretations as a subject or teaching aiming at the truth through reasoned argumentation.
- iii. Church fathers: Christian Theologians who lived in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD who are believed to have knowledge of the twelve Apostles. Chief among them was Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch

(Thephorus) to whom Luke addressed The Gospel to (C. 35 – 110 AD); Polycarp of Smyrna (c. 69 – 155 AD) now Izmir in Turkey.

- a. Later Greek Fathers, Syriac Fathers, Desert Fathers etc.
- b. Today various churches have had ministers of the word and sacrament referred to as Fathers/Papa. The late Right Reverend Doctor Wanjau of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa was popularly referred to by church groups as “papa” – Father

iv. Persons Mentioned in the book.

- a. St. Anthony: the father of monasticism left the sister to the care of the church and went to lead a monastic life in the desert.
- b. Donatus: the primeval initiator of “First Protestantism” as he disagreed with the pope’s handling the church matters and began a movement known as Donatism. He was an early bishop of Casae Nigrae in the North Africa.
- c. Tertullian (160 – 240 AD): a leading member of the church in North Africa in Carthage. He spoke Greek, but Latin was his native language. He was the first Theologian to propagate the doctrine of Trinity coined from the Latin word trinas.
- d. Athanasius: a theologian who lived in Alexandria. Remember Athananius creed – which affirmed that we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither bleeding their persons nor dividing their essence.
- e. Perpetua and Felicita: were Christian martyrs of the 3rd century. Vibia Perpetua was martyred at age 22, a mother left an infant she was nursing (203AD). They were martyred together for their

faith in Carthage in the Roman province of Africa. Felicity was a slave girl (maid) to Perpetua, a noble woman. They were murdered by Emperor Severus.

- v. Heaven: abode of God and those closely associated with him. It is the holy habitation from where he watches upon his creation (Our Father who is in heaven” New Bible Dictionary (page 510) it is a parallel realm where everything operates according to God’s will—a place of peace, love, community and worship. There is a heavenly court and other heavenly beings.
- vi. New heaven and a new earth shall come about at the end of the age at Christ’s second coming. The time will be swallowed by eternity (IS 65:17, IS 66.22, 2nd Peter 3:10–13, Rev 21
- vii. Eternity: will be as a result of time ceasing to exist. Seasons are a byproduct of time. The movement of the earth round the sun creates seconds, minutes, and the hour, the day and night and seasons. Time and seasons are co joined. At Parousia the eternal life shall fully experience it as it will be by resurrection (John 11:23–25) when this age overlaps with the age to come the present will melt into the absence of limitation of duration. (Jer 31:3; 32:40, Hos 2:19) we shall enjoy that non limitation to any fixed span (Ps 145:12–13; Dan 9:24, Ps: 132:14)
- viii. Unity of purpose in Christ (for prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) prepares God’s people for works of service to build the body of Christ until we all live in unity in faith and in knowledge of the son of God and become mature attaining to the full measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:12–13). Denominations of various persuasions, the Roman Catholic and Eastern

Orthodoxy—all try to preserve the status quo, by the intellectuals, the clergy try to live by what has been bequeathed to them in the two thousand church history. All and sundry should fit into the combined harvester model in order to harvest people to a beautiful glorious people who do not identify ethnically, racially, social class, rich or poor, but are one's glorious people who live as servants of the chief-servant Jesus Christ.

- ix. Some informative notes on ecumenism
- a. Mode 1: Sharing same building e.g. African Inland Church Bebirioni (Ngarariga)/PCEA Limuru both churches constructed the church together in the early 1960s. Each church leads worship services on alternate Sundays. Lavinton United Church has Methodist Church/PCEA Church uniting together for worship, with each church appointing a minister and own elders.
 - b. Mode 2: Holding ecumenical worship services with different denominations together. In addition to such regular congregations, once a year, an ecumenical week (e.g., January 13th–18th, 2025) takes place. This year, the launch of the prayer week was held at the Lutheran Church along Uhuru Highway, Nairobi, on January 18th by the Kenya Chapter. The theme was "Do You Believe?" and was provided by the Bose Monastic Community in Italy (see glossary, xi). It was based on the death of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, with Jesus coming as the resurrection and the life (John 11:17–27).
 - c. Mode 3: Dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches started after Vatican II (1962–1965). The Lutheran–Catholic dialogue also began

in the 1960s. Within the larger ecumenical bodies, there has been a "ceasefire" in religious doctrinal wars among Christian friends and relatives.

The main goal of ecumenism is to energize Christians to see their life and mission united, aligning their lives and efforts so that the body of Christ and humanity can be drawn closer to fulfilling God's purpose in Christ. Ecumenism endeavors to bring Christian denominations and persuasions to the realization of the biblical foundations of their pilgrimage, rather than rooting themselves in traditions and native cultures. The traditional ecumenical hymns, "The Church is One Foundation" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching On to War," were prayerfully sung.

- d. Mode 4: The National Christian Council of Kenya and the Kenya Evangelical Fellowship are the two umbrella bodies that encourage the Kenya Chapter of the World Ecumenical Council. The Kenya Chapter grew from humble beginnings, initiated by the late Rev. Dr. George E. Wanjau (PCEA) and the late Father Prof. Joseph G. Donders. It began as the Nairobi Ecumenical Group, with Elder Solomon Gachache (PCEA St. Andrew's Church, Nairobi) as the convenor in 1992. In 2014, it was registered as the Kenya Chapter of the World Ecumenical Council with the Registrar of Societies in Kenya. Elder Solomon Gachache naturally assumed the lead as its first chairperson.

The point I am belaboring to deliver is threefold:

- i. Spreading the gospel, the message of the church, far outweighs our differences and is crucial enough to use every possible human resource, as gifts are varied (Eph. 4: 11–12).
- ii. It becomes a tragic hindrance to the spread of the good news when personalizations are allowed to stand in the way of the ministry.
- iii. The Head of the Body of Christ and the Helper (the Holy Spirit) is great enough to overcome such obstacles. The story of Joseph and his siblings is a classical example of God's providence and is intimately involved with running the church and, in general, His creation.

Let us look at some blessings we get from denominational schema:

- The Roman Catholic Church follows Christ's command about the Lord's Table to the letter at practically all masses.
- The Presbyterians and Reformed denominations bring the needed doctrinal foundation to the Body of Christ.
- The Baptists bring a zeal for Evangelism.
- The Methodists bring an organization for Christian Education—the idea of Sunday School being one of their legacies to the church.
- The Lutherans bring in a rich liturgy.
- The Independent Bible Churches bring a commitment to the Scripture.
- The Charismatics bring a joy in worship, which the mainline churches are adopting, especially in the area of music/praise and worship phenomena.

x. **A Christian separation (not severing!)**

If Christians separate on doctrinal Arguments, it is provident to follow the very primeval lesson from Paul and Barnabas and Paul and Silas motif (Acts 15: 39-41). This explanation follow heavily from <http://www.anelfire.com/nt/theology Acts 15-36>

- "Barnabas took his cousin John Mark and Saul to Cyprus. This made sense, as Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36)."
- Paul and Silas took an overland route to Anatolia Hinterland to Tarsus his home town.

All said, observed, and done, we see at a later stage in life that Paul, while in prison, yearned for Mark. 'Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service' (2nd Timothy 4:11). Preaching, evangelizing, winning souls for Christ, and subsequent discipleship in a vast area—the field is large enough for multiple approaches. The Protestant Reformation relieved the Body of Christ from human-crafted unity, which, for all intents and purposes, had prevented individual believers from accessing Scripture. This is illustrated by the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–40: 'Do you understand what you are reading?'... 'How can I unless I have someone to explain it to me?' (Acts 8:31).

xi. **Bose Monastic Community**

An ecumenical community was founded by Enzo Bianchi in 1965. It comprises monks and nuns belonging to different Christian churches, seeking God in obedience to the gospel and living in fraternal communion.