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# PneumAfrica

JOURNAL

## Editorial: Towards New Missions Frontiers

Dear friends,

Welcome to this new Edition of *PneumAfrica*!

Allow me to begin this editorial with a word of acknowledgement to Jerry Ireland who served as the inaugural editor of *PneumAfrica* and set a very high standard for this publication. Even though he has stepped out of the role of Editor he has continued to offer his invaluable input as part of the larger editorial team, for which we are thankful.

The articles and book reviews in this edition of *PneumAfrica* explore different facets of God's mission. Mission propels the church to explore frontiers for the purpose of advancing the *missio Dei*. The nature of the frontiers that must be explored often transcends the physical and the geographical. The Church is called to explore boundaries of every kind for the sake of the advancing of the gospel. This includes a willingness to map out new theological frontiers as part of what may be required to advance the missionary life and calling of the church. A recurrent theme in this edition of *PneumAfrica* is the application of missiological insight to new theological challenges and arenas for just such a purpose.

In this vein, our first article written by Linda Seiler presents a response to issues of homosexuality that is fashioned around the concept of the *missio Dei* and its implications for human sexuality. While she writes from a North American vantage point the subject matter, and the manner in which it has been framed, make it salient reading given the current widespread discourse on the subject across Africa. In his article addressing the state of missions in the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance (AAGA) Enson Lwesya argues that its missionary enterprise has been imprisoned by a North American missiology that is not accommodative of the scriptural latitude on what constitutes missions, and one that is painfully

inappropriate for the contextual realities of Africa. Emmanuel Kwasi Amofo argues in his article that example of the missional formation of the people of God in the wilderness journey provides normative lessons for the contemporary church in Ghana. While in our ministerial reflection Jeff Nelson and Ismael Yusuf explore the potential positive result of persecution by juxtaposing a biblical case study with one from a contemporary Islamic context.

As you read through read through the articles and the book reviews in this edition of *PneumAfrica* our prayer for you is that you may be prompted to consider new frontiers that you may required to cross in order that you might be used in new and greater ways to advance the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Peace be with you,

Andrew Mkwaila  
Editor

## AN EXEGESIS OF THE ISRAELITE WILDERNESS JOURNEY AS A PARADIGM OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR THE GHANA CHURCH TODAY

Emmanuel Kwasi Amofo<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This paper presents, in two parts, an exegesis of the Israelites' *physical* wilderness journey as a paradigm of their inner *spiritual* journey to become the people of God. The perspective of this paper is that this narrative offers normative lessons for the Ghana church today in its own journey from the syncretism and animistic worldview and practices of its background of African Traditional Religion to becoming the set-apart people of God in Ghana.

### Exegesis of the Wilderness Journey

#### *Exegesis of Exodus-Deuteronomy*

The narrative of the Israelite exodus from Egypt and their subsequent wilderness journey span the Old Testament Pentateuch books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. An exegetical review of these four Pentateuch books gives a broad picture of the Israelites' exodus out of Egypt and their ensuing forty-year wilderness journey.

The book of Exodus narrates the story of Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt and her constitution to become the people of God. It recounts the story of God's covenant with the children of Israel at Sinai and God's instructions for them to construct the tabernacle in the wilderness as the place of God's presence among them.<sup>2</sup> The narrative divides naturally into three main parts. The first part is from chapters 1 to 14. This first part tells the story of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt and it culminates with God redeeming Israel "with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment" (Exodus 6:6). The second part is from chapters 16 to 18. This is the account of the beginnings of Israel's wilderness journey as they make their way to Mount Sinai. Here, God guides his redeemed people by a pillar of fire and cloud and miraculously provides sustenance for them with manna, quail and water. This is the beginning of God's training of the Israelites to relate to him in faith and obedience. The third and final part of book is from chapters 19 to 40. This portion of the story records Israel at Mount Sinai entering into the Sinai Covenant with God. The Covenant stipulations included the Law and the Levitical priesthood and instructions for building the tabernacle as the place of God's presence among the Israelites.<sup>3</sup> Goheen has summarized these three parts of the book as being first, God's redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Kwasi Amoafa is an ordained minister and a doctoral Student at Pan-African Theological Seminary in Lome, Togo.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2002), 34.

<sup>3</sup> Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006), 63.

(Exodus 1—18), second, God binding them to himself in covenant (Exodus 19—24), and third, God coming to dwell in their midst (Exodus 25-40).<sup>4</sup>

The book of Leviticus picks up from where the book of Exodus leaves off and presents God's instructions to Moses during the two months between the completion of the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 40:17) and Israel's departure from Mount Sinai.<sup>5</sup> The book can be divided into two broad parts. The first part, from chapters 1 to 16, contains God's provision for the atonement of sin through blood sacrifices. The second part of the book, from chapters 17 to 27, presents God's requirements for the daily out-working of purity and holy living in the lives of his covenant people. A recurring command in this second part of the book is, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (E.g. Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 26).<sup>6</sup>

The book of Numbers covers a large portion of the forty years that Israel spent in the wilderness. The book has three major divisions. The first division is from chapter 1 to 13. Here, Israel is at Sinai, preparing to depart for the land of promise. This is followed by the journey from Sinai to Kadesh. The second part is from chapter 13 to 22. Here, Israel is at Kadesh, delayed as a result of a major rebellion (chapter 13:1—20:13). This is followed by the journey from Kadesh to the plains of Moab. The third and final part of the book is from chapter 22 to 36. Here, Israel, camped on the plains of Moab, anticipates the conquest of Canaan.

The book of Numbers narrates the murmuring and rebellion of the Israelites during the wilderness journey and their subsequent judgment by God. Although God had redeemed them from bondage in Egypt and had entered into the Sinai covenant with them, they failed to respond to God with faith, gratitude and obedience. Their predominant response to God was one of unbelief, ingratitude and repeated acts of rebellion.<sup>7</sup> This came to a head in chapter 14 with the refusal of the Israelites to undertake the conquest of Canaan. Although the covenant at Sinai had established their identity as the people of God the majority of them forfeited entry into the Promised Land. They were condemned to live and die in the wilderness. God removed the entire generation that failed to trust Him, except for Joshua and Caleb, and molded the new generation into a unified nation, prepared to conquer the land He had promised them.<sup>8</sup>

The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth and final book of the Pentateuch. It records the final days of Moses' leadership of the Israelites' towards the end of their 40-year wilderness odyssey into the Promised Land. Camped in the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River two months before they would cross into Canaan the Israelites were addressed by Moses. Moses' address to the Israelites is recorded in three major sermons (Deut. 1:6-4:40; 5:1-26:19; 27:1-31:13). In these sermons Moses reviewed the history of the Israelites up to that time. He repeated and expanded upon the laws that God had given to them in the Sinai Covenant (Exodus

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Goheen W, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. (Baker Academic, 2011), 34.

<sup>5</sup>Fee, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 43.

<sup>6</sup>Leon James Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1986), 162–166.

<sup>7</sup>Fee, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 49–51.

<sup>8</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2008), 87.

19-24) and he reminded them of God’s promised blessing for obedience to the law and His promised curses for disobedience to the law.<sup>9</sup> Deryck Sheriffs describes Deuteronomy as looking back “on the whole wilderness journey as a training exercise.”<sup>10</sup>

*Journeying to Become the People of God*

Christopher Wright considers the Israelite bondage in Egypt as having political, social, economic and spiritual dimensions.<sup>11</sup> He sees God’s redemption of the Israelites as being a decisive act on the part of God that began the process of shaping the Israelites to become his people. He notes that, “God’s momentous act of redemption did not merely rescue Israel from political, economic and social oppression...the exodus effected real change in the people’s real historical situation and...called them into a new and real relationship with the living God.”<sup>12</sup> God’s call of Israel into a new and real relationship with him, Wright maintains, shows the spiritual dimension of the wilderness journey. He notes that, “The spiritual dimension of the exodus, then, is that God makes it clear that his purpose in the whole process is that it should lead to the *knowledge, service and worship* of the living God.”<sup>13</sup>

The implication of this is that the Israelites could not worship the living God and the gods of Egypt at the same time. This lesson was brought forcefully home to the Israelites by the Golden Calf incident recorded in Exodus 32. Thinking that Moses, their leader, who had been gone for forty days into the presence of God on Mt. Sinai had perished up there (Exod. 32:1), the Israelites, influenced by long-practiced traditions of Egyptian bull worship, carved a golden calf and began to worship this as their god who would lead them back to the certainties of Egypt. It is evident from this incident that only newly separated from the idolatry, paganism, syncretism and animism of Egypt, the Israelites had not yet come to a full appreciation of the God they now served. Less than six weeks after they had entered into covenant with Yahweh and bound themselves to obey the Law, they had broken the covenant.

Charles Kraft defines syncretism as the mixing of biblical worldview assumptions with non-biblical worldview assumptions that are basically incompatible with one another.<sup>14</sup> Steyne defines animism as the belief that the physical material world is integrally linked to the supernatural world that controls everything in life.<sup>15</sup> The animist believes that human life can be

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<sup>9</sup>Fee, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, 55–56.

<sup>10</sup>Deryck Sheriffs, “Moving on with God: Key Motifs in Exodus 13–20,” 2010, 51, [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/exodus\\_sheriffs.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/exodus_sheriffs.pdf). (Accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>11</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2006), 271.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Charles Kraft in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed., eds. Ralph D. Winter et al. (Pasadena, Calif: William Carey Library, 2009), 405.

<sup>15</sup>Philip M. Steyne, *Gods of Power: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Animists* (Columbia, S.C: Impact International Foundation, 1999), 34–39.

controlled by the attainment of supernatural knowledge and supernatural power to manipulate the supernatural realm of spirit beings to meet human material objectives. This manipulation of the supernatural involves the active use of divination, witchcraft, sorcery, necromancy, astrology, prophecies, ancestors, omens, charms and spells.<sup>16</sup> Adds Kent Mundhenk, “The practical definition of animism is simply trying to get the spirits to do what one wants them to do.”<sup>17</sup>

This is precisely what the Israelites were seeking to do. Still functioning with the worldview of Egypt, they sought to manipulate their fate through idolatry and animism. Their physical wilderness journey was therefore in reality an inner spiritual movement from syncretism and animism to spiritual formation and discipleship to become the set-apart people of God. Reiterating this view, P.J. Johnson sees the wilderness journey as offering timeless truths about “how to journey with God” in faith and obedience.<sup>18</sup> Stephen Smalley concurs with the recognition of the wilderness journey as a picture of “walking in the ways of the Lord”<sup>19</sup> and he goes on to observe further that, “The historical event of the Exodus, in other words, comes to be used figuratively as a paradigm of the spiritual life.”<sup>20</sup> Sheriffs adds his voice to the idea of seeing the wilderness journey as a spiritual metaphor. He notes that “moving out of Egypt and moving on with God” highlights “the journey metaphor, the motif of a walk with God along a route chosen by him through unknown terrain and hazards to an ultimate destination.”<sup>21</sup> Sheriffs further notes that, “The journey was to God himself . . . The whole exodus story is about leaving and arriving and what happens in between. The physical journey is the outward visible form of a profound spiritual movement.”<sup>22</sup>

Goheen argues that the Israelites’ inner spiritual journey from Egyptian syncretism and animism to become the set-apart people of God was deemed necessary by God for three reasons.<sup>23</sup> First, Goheen explains, it was to give Israel a new and unique identity as the people of God.<sup>24</sup> Second, it was so that Israel would be the means by which God accomplishes his missional goal to redeem and to renew creation and the nations.<sup>25</sup> Third, it was so that Israel

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Kent Mundhenk, “Common Threads of Animism,” *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (2006): 7, [www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/mjt/22-1\\_06.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/mjt/22-1_06.pdf). (Accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>18</sup>P.J. Johnson, “The Murmuring Tradition: A Paradigm for Every Age,” *The Indian Journal of Theology*, 24, [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/38-1\\_016.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ijt/38-1_016.pdf). (Accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>19</sup>Stephen Smalley, “The Imitation of Christ in the New Testament,” 14, accessed May 22, 2014, [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ifes/3-1\\_smalley.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ifes/3-1_smalley.pdf). (Accessed April 30, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Deryck Sheriffs, “Moving on with God: Key Motifs in Exodus 13–20,” 51.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>23</sup>Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*, 34–43.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 38.



would become “a display people, a contrast people in the midst of the nations, a showcase to the world of how being in covenant with Yahweh changes a people.”<sup>26</sup>

### Application to the Ghana Church

#### *Profile of Ghanaian Christianity Today*

Christianity first arrived in Ghana in the fifteenth century. It came with the Roman Catholic Mission although the Catholic Mission’s early efforts to introduce Christianity to then Gold Coast failed.<sup>27</sup> By the mid-1800’s, however, through the enterprising missionary activities of Protestant missionaries, Christianity had been firmly established in the country. These Protestant missionaries came from the Basel Mission (1845), the Bremen Mission (1847), and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission (1840).<sup>28</sup> Jones Amanor notes that a recent survey conducted by Operation World and published in 1993 shows that 64% of Ghanaians were Christians.<sup>29</sup> Amanor adds, however, that, “The extent to which the population was truly Christianized has, however, come under some scrutiny since the discovery, by the Ghana Evangelism Committee, that nominalism is the greatest problem of Christianity in Ghana today.”<sup>30</sup> This is a view shared by other concerned observers. Paul Gifford, in his recent seminal study of the state of the church in Ghana, concluded that the majority of the large Pentecostal and charismatic congregations and their leaders in the country were far more focused on material success, health, wealth and deliverance from witchcraft than on Christian spiritual formation and discipleship.<sup>31</sup>

Different reasons have been proposed by Ghanaian scholars to explain this phenomenon. Kingsley Larbi notes Pentecostals form the bulk of the Christian population of 62% because Ghanaian Pentecostalism has found a fertile ground in the all-pervasive primal religious traditions of the people of Ghana.<sup>32</sup> Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu blames “the precariousness of life

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>27</sup>Opoku Onyinah, “Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History,” *Cyberjournal For Pentecostal-Charismatic Research*, 2001, 1, <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj10/onyinah.html>. (Accessed April 30, 2014).

<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>29</sup>Jones Darkwa Amanor, “Pentecostalism in Ghana: An African Reformation,” *Cyberjournal For Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 13, no. 1 (2008): 4, [www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/amanor.html](http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj13/amanor.html).

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 5. (Accessed April 30, 2014).

<sup>31</sup>Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2004), 60–62.

<sup>32</sup>Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, “The Nature Of Continuity And Discontinuity Of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept Of Salvation In African Cosmology,” *Cyberjournal For Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 10, No. 1 (2001): 10, [Http://Www.Pctii.Org/Cyberj/Cyberj10/Larbi.Html](http://Www.Pctii.Org/Cyberj/Cyberj10/Larbi.Html).

in a world of poverty and unstable government.”<sup>33</sup> Opoku Onyinah sees this trend as being clear manifestations of syncretism and animism. He observes that, “The main agenda of . . . Ghanaian Pentecostals is deliverance, which is based on the fear of spirit forces, especially witchcraft.”<sup>34</sup>

### *Becoming the People of God in Ghana*

As already noted above Goheen has emphasized that the Israelites were required to see themselves as having been separated from their life of idolatry and animism in Egypt to become the set-apart people of God, a people who rendered full allegiance to God alone.<sup>35</sup>

This applies to the church in Ghana today. It is only as the Ghana church sees itself as having been released “from an idolatrous way of life to live as a contrast community”<sup>36</sup> that she can be assured of God’s abiding presence and his continued providence as was the case with the Israelites during their wilderness journey.

God’s presence was constantly felt and seen by the Israelites in the form of the pillar of cloud to guide them by day and the pillar of fire to guide and to give them light at night (Exodus 14:24). McKinney notes that, “God used his presence to lead his people out of slavery into the Promised Land . . . The pillar of cloud/fire was a constant encouragement that God was near and leading.”<sup>37</sup> The Israelites’ assurance of God’s constant presence also assured them of his continual providence. McKinney observes that God’s miraculous provision of water, manna and meat in the wilderness revealed that his presence with the Israelites was not only a physical reality but also a spiritual one.<sup>38</sup>

No matter how difficult it may be, the church in Ghana today, in the power of the Holy Spirit, will need to make the hard decision and take the decisive steps required to relinquish its syncretism and animistic disposition to become a true set-apart people in that nation. Referring to how “difficult Israel found it to move on with God and ‘embrace covenantal modes of life’” Sheriffs reminds us that our own movement from syncretism and animism in our Christian expressions will of necessity involve “growth by wrenching transitions and changes that are wrought through discontinuity, displacement and disjunction.”<sup>39</sup>

Nixon calls attention to the dangers inherent in resisting this necessary but difficult movement from syncretism and animism to spiritual formation and discipleship. Referring to the

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<sup>33</sup>J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* Vol. 38, No. 2 (2013): 5. (Accessed April 30, 2014).

<sup>34</sup>Opoku Onyinah, “Deliverance as a Way of Confronting Witchcraft in Modern Africa: Ghana as a Case History,” 6.

<sup>35</sup>Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story.*, 34.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Philip L. McKinney, “Leading By Being Led,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 5, No. 1 (2013): 147. (Accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 149.

<sup>39</sup>Deryck Sheriffs, “Moving on with God: Key Motifs in Exodus 13–20.,” 57.

Israelites' wilderness journey Nixon draws from the book of Hebrews and sees the writer, in Hebrews 3:7 to 4:13, convincingly explaining that, "God brought all the people out of Egypt but none (except Joshua and Caleb) entered the Promised Land. They were faithless and they were destroyed."<sup>40</sup> Nixon's conclusion is that Christians today too must come out of any forms of religion that bears the marks of syncretism and empty formalism "and go forth with Christ."<sup>41</sup> To do this and to become the set-apart people of God in Ghana today there are major implications for the Ghana church from the lessons highlighted above that need to be practically worked out in the life of the church.

First, because of its present highly syncretistic context, the Ghana church must pray for a major shift of its focus from the material to the spiritual through a Spirit-led revival. This is both necessary and urgent if *Ghanaian Christians* are going to become first and foremost *Christian Ghanaians*. Second, the church, through its non-formal church-based Bible study programs, must promote Spirit-led discipleship and spiritual formation aimed at transforming the worldview of Ghanaian Christians. Third, the Church's theological institutions must focus on training Ghanaian church leaders in sound evangelical biblical exegesis and hermeneutics and in how to engage with the Word of God in daily Ghanaian life. As already noted above, Gifford has described the current defining theology of most of the new Ghana Charismatic-Pentecostal churches as being the prosperity doctrine of material success, health, wealth and deliverance from evil spirits.

This is how the Ghana church, like the journeying people of Israel in the wilderness, can be assured of God's constant spiritual presence and provision. This is also how the Ghana church will first, begin to demonstrate Spirit-led living that shows Christ's power over all the powers of darkness and second, actively prepare for the return of Christ through a vigorous and determined involvement in the mission of God in the Ghanaian context.

### Conclusion

This paper has presented, in two parts, an exegesis of the Israelite wilderness journey. In the first part of the paper the exegesis has offered the Israelites' physical journey as a paradigm of the Israelites' inner spiritual journey to become the people of God. In the second part of the paper an attempt has been made to see the wilderness narrative as offering normative lessons for the Ghana church today in its own journey from its ATR-conditioned syncretism and animistic worldview and practices to becoming the set-apart people of God in Ghana. The second part has also offered implications for change for the Ghana church derived from this paper and their proposed out-workings for the church in Ghana.

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<sup>40</sup>R.E. Nixon, "The Exodus in the New Testament," 26, [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/exodus\\_nixon.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/exodus_nixon.pdf). (Accessed May 22, 2014).

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 27.

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**HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF *MISSIO DEI*:  
A RESPONSE TO TODAY'S SEXUAL CRISIS**Linda Seiler<sup>1</sup>**INTRODUCTION**

The United States is in the midst of a cultural crisis regarding sexuality and the definition of marriage. As of the writing of this paper, more than half of the states in the Union have legalized “gay marriage,” marking the tide of a momentous cultural shift in just twenty-four months.<sup>2</sup> Even in the Church, the notion that laity and clergy alike can claim a “gay Christian” identity is gaining popularity through organizations such as the Gay Christian Network.<sup>3</sup> Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, likens the current revolution to the theological crisis the early church faced with Gnosticism which challenged the Church’s understanding of the gospel itself.<sup>4</sup> In responding to this current cultural crisis, many Christians default to what Mohler calls the “concordance reflex,”<sup>5</sup> which equates to finding proof texts to debunk the mistaken notion that God condones homosexuality. However, the “concordance reflex” fails on two accounts. First, pro-gay advocates often contort the proof texts to justify homosexuality, leaving the typical layperson speechless. Second, a concordance cannot readily answer questions about “transgender,” “lesbian,” or “transvestite” issues because these words do not appear in the Bible. This dilemma does not imply Scripture is insufficient to address such issues. Rather, it indicates one’s approach to Scripture is insufficient. Instead of turning to proof texts in isolation, the Church must respond to the current crisis by looking at the Bible through the lens of a missional hermeneutic which reveals God’s ultimate purpose for sexuality. When viewing sexuality in such a context, it becomes clear that homosexuality is incongruent with God’s salvific purposes.

This paper will explain why the nature of God’s overall mission inherently disqualifies homosexuality as part of God’s design for sexuality. Part one will examine the mission of God, or *missio Dei*, as an extension of the Trinity and *imago Dei*, the image of God, as a reflection of the missional Trinity. Part two will explain the correlation between *imago Dei* and *missio Dei*, including a theology of the body and how earthly marriage foreshadows the greater spiritual reality of Christ and the Church. Part three will discuss the purpose of human sexuality in light of

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<sup>2</sup> Cable News Network Library, “Same-Sex Marriage Fast Facts.”  
<http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/28/us/same-sex-marriage-fast-facts/> (Accessed October 17, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Michael L. Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?: Responding with Love and Truth to Questions About Homosexuality*. (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline. 2014), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Mohler, “An Evangelical Theology of the Body: Biblical Theology and the Sexuality Crisis”  
<http://www.albertmohler.com/2014/09/16/biblical-theology-and-the-sexuality-crisis> (Accessed Oct. 1, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. (Accessed Oct. 1, 2014).

*missio Dei*. Finally, part four will address the resulting implications for sexual practice and why homosexuality is inherently wrong because it fundamentally maligns *imago Dei* and is thus incongruent with *missio Dei*.

### **MISSIO DEI: EXTENSION OF THE TRINITY**

The Latin phrase *missio Dei*, commonly referred to as “the mission of God,” originally meant, “the sending of God,” as seen through God the Father sending the Son and the Father and the Son sending the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> As such, the mission of God is essentially an extension of the Trinity, rescuing humanity from the effects of sin and inviting redeemed men and women to join the divine community. “The final goal of God’s salvific activities, then, is community—human society enjoying perfect fellowship with the created world and with the Creator.”<sup>7</sup>

By extension, the community enjoyed among humans made in the image of God ought to reflect the nature of the God who created them. Additionally, human relationships ought to align with the overall mission of their Creator. Scripture attests to both realities, as noted in the following sections.

#### *Imago Dei: In the Image of the Trinity*

The Genesis creation account follows the predictable pattern of “Let there be...and it was so,” until the sixth day when God creates humankind. Before his crowning act, God breaks the narrative pattern with a reference to Himself, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,” (1:26) inferring that humans stand alone as the only creation that images God Himself. However, in order to image God, the creation must reflect the unique dynamic of the Trinity in which three distinct Persons exist as one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 illustrates the paradox: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God [*elohim*, a plural word referring to God], the Lord is one [*echad*, one in essence—emphasizing unity, not just a numerical value.]”<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Trinity captures the divine mystery of unity in diversity or “unity-in-difference.” As a reflection of such “unity-in-difference,” God creates uniquely gendered males and females and refers to both of them as humans. Therefore, the image of God “is not male in isolation from female, or female in isolation from male, but male and female in relationship with one another.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the image of God, or *imago Dei*, purposefully includes sexuality. As Grenz notes,

It is not without significance that in both Genesis narratives when God chooses to create what would mirror the divine being, he creates male and female. This aspect of the Genesis stories indicates that our sexuality and human sexual distinctions are

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<sup>6</sup>Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic. Kindle Edition, 2006), 703-704.

<sup>7</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 1997). 49.

<sup>8</sup>Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?: And Other Questions About Homosexuality, the Bible and Same Sex Attraction* (The Good Book Company. 2013), 170-174.

<sup>9</sup>George Wood, “Human Sexuality in the Image of God” *Enrichment Journal* 16 (2011): 31-36. [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201103/201103\\_030\\_Hum\\_sexuality.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201103/201103_030_Hum_sexuality.cfm). (Accessed October 9, 2014).

somehow grounded in the divine reality and that the existence of two sexes is important for our understanding of God.<sup>10</sup>

Genesis 2:24 offers further insight as to the mystery of *imago Dei*: “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.” The same Hebrew word, *echad*, used to describe “unity-in-difference” in the Godhead, refers to a husband and wife becoming one, thus reflecting the divine Trinitarian mystery.<sup>11</sup> Only a heterosexual union can image such a paradox. Consequently, Scripture prohibits sexual behavior that violates the principle of “unity-in-difference.” For example, Gen. 2:20b, “But for Adam no suitable helper was found,” constitutes “an implicit rejection of bestiality,” as Adam and an animal would be too much “other.”<sup>12</sup> Incest is likewise prohibited as “sex with someone who is too much of a same or like.”<sup>13</sup> Scripture forbids homosexuality on the same grounds since two of the same gender cannot image “unity-in-difference.”

### *Does God Have Gender?*

While *imago Dei* includes sexuality, it does not imply that God has gender. God is Spirit; he is not male or female nor a duality of the two. All males and females find their source in God, and yet God’s essence reaches beyond gender distinctions. Unlike the ancient pagan gods who copulated with goddesses to bring forth creation, Yahweh stands alone as the sole progenitor of creation.<sup>14</sup> Thus, God included sexuality in *imago Dei* not as a commentary on his own sexuality but as a means of revealing his character and nature in a way that humans can comprehend: “Detecting divine transcendence in human reality requires human clues... God creates, in the image of God, male and female. To describe male and female, then, is to perceive the image of God; to perceive the image of God is to glimpse the transcendence of God.”<sup>15</sup>

In order to help humans, comprehend His transcendent nature, God describes Himself with both male and female characteristics. The most obvious references of Father and Son resonate with the human concept of maleness. However, God also employs feminine imagery to reveal his character. For example, “...the Spirit of God hovered or brooded over the primeval waters (Gen. 1:2b), hatching, as it were, the egg of the world.”<sup>16</sup> God compares Himself to a mother comforting her children (Isa. 66:13), to a hen gathering her chicks (Matt. 23:27), and to one who gives birth (James 1:18). In fact, the foundational kingdom concept of being “born again” (John 3:3) elicits the feminine imagery of a womb. Thus, God encompasses both male and female characteristics and utilizes human sexuality as a means to reveal his transcendent nature in a way understandable to humans.

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<sup>10</sup>Grenz, 45.

<sup>11</sup>Allbery, 170- 174.

<sup>12</sup>Samuel H. Dresner, "Homosexuality and the Order of Creation." *Judaism* 40 (1991): 309

<sup>13</sup>Robert A. J. Gagnon, "Gays and the Bible." *Christian Century* no. 17 (2002): 41.

<sup>14</sup>Grenz, 293. (2001)

<sup>15</sup>Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1978), 21

<sup>16</sup>Grenz, 288. (2001)



*Imaging God's Desire for Relationship*

In addition to revealing clues about God's character and nature, human sexuality illustrates the mysterious kind of relationship God experiences in eternal triune community, which thus informs the quality of relationship he desires to experience with his creation. The mystery unravels throughout the course of the Old Testament as God compares his desire for relationship with Israel to the covenantal love between bride and groom (Jer. 2:2, Isa. 61:10). The prophets employed terms like adultery (Hosea 4:15), prostitution (Ezek. 23), and divorce (Jer. 3:8) as appropriate metaphors to Israel's breach in covenantal love.

The marital motif continues in the New Testament with even greater clarity. For instance, 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 compares the sexual union between a man and woman to their union with God: "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit." A similar comparison appears in Ephesians 5:31-32: "'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church." Finally, the Book of Revelation builds on the motif of covenantal love by marking the culmination of God's redemptive mission with the marriage of the Lamb to his bride.

These passages indicate that God's design for marriage in the physical realm merely shadows a greater spiritual reality—that of Christ joined to his bride, the Church. In the same way that the bodies of a husband and wife come together in a covenantal sexual union to form a deep and intimate bond, so too God wants to know humanity in the most intimate way possible, spirit touching Spirit. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, psychologist and professor of interdisciplinary studies at Calvin College, writes about human sexuality paralleling the God-inspired drive toward intimacy:

Sexuality as part of God's image...is the human drive towards intimate communion. More than a mere physical itch that needs scratching, it urges us "to experience the other, to trust the other, and to be trusted by [that other person], to enter the other's life by entering the vital embrace of his or her body." Of course, the search toward mutual trust and self-disclosure is also present in friendships and family relationships at their best. But with the urge for sexual intercourse there comes the added dimension of passion, ecstasy and throwing-off of restraint. Thus sexual intimacy involves, at one time, the maximum degree of risk (if it goes badly) and the maximum promise of communion (if it goes well).<sup>17</sup>

Seiler expounds on Van Leeuwen's commentary:

The fact that God desires such intimate communion with His creation is not nearly as astounding as the thought that God would figuratively throw off restraint, become vulnerable with His creation, and risk total rejection. And yet that is the kind of God who rules the universe—One who invites humanity into relationship with Him in order to experience mutual trust and self-disclosure with the added dimension of throwing off all restraints in order to know and be fully known. Thus,

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<sup>17</sup>Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart, *Gender & Grace: Love, Work & Parenting in a Changing World*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 213-214.

human sexuality reveals the nature of God's intimate, risk-taking, all-consuming love.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to imaging God's desire for intimate relationship, sexuality provides insight into how God will fulfill his redemptive mission: "Human sexuality, with its procreative ability, now is shown to be the means God will utilize in the establishment of a redeemed humanity. The Redeemer will be the Child of the woman."<sup>19</sup> Part 2 expands on the significance of male and female bodies participating in *missio Dei*

### **MISSIO DEI AND THE HUMAN BODY**

As mentioned in Part 1, God purposefully included sexuality as part of *imago Dei* to help humans comprehend his nature and to provide insights into the kind of intimate relationship God desires with those made in his image. However, the gendered human body also plays an integral role in God's plan to redeem fallen humanity and restore them to relationship with Him. Contrary to the common notion that the human body is intrinsically evil, God's plan for creation, incarnation, and resurrection all affirm the necessity of the human body—including sexuality—to accomplish his mission.<sup>20</sup>

Consider first how the body plays a central role in God's plan for creation. As Mohler notes, "The body, as it turns out, is not incidental to our personhood. Adam and Eve are given the commission to multiply and subdue the earth. Their bodies allow them, by God's creation and his sovereign plan, to fulfill that task of image-bearing,"<sup>21</sup> which is to fill the earth with more image bearers. Only a heterosexual union can fulfill the creation mandate.

The body plays a central role in the Fall as well. One need not venture beyond the book of Genesis to see its effects. Following Adam and Eve's initial marriage covenant blessed by God, the remainder of Genesis describes the use of the body in sexual aberrations ranging from homosexuality in Sodom (Gen. 19), to incest between Lot and his daughters (Gen. 19), to the rape of Dinah (Gen. 34). Thus, the Fall corrupted all human relationships and produced a distorted view of sexuality.

The incarnation and redemptive work of the cross also involve the body. As Mohler writes, "...we must note that one of the most important aspects of our redemption is that it came by way of a Savior with a *body*. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14; cf. Phil. 2:5-11). Human redemption is accomplished by the Son of God *incarnate*—who remains incarnate eternally."<sup>22</sup> Thus, the body is indispensable to God's plan of salvation.

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<sup>18</sup>Linda Seiler, "Compassion without Compromise: A Christian Response to Homosexuality." *Master's Thesis, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary*. (2014), 3.

<sup>19</sup>Grenz, 59. (1997).

<sup>20</sup>Mark A. Yarhouse, "Homosexuality, Ethics and Identity Synthesis." *Christian Bioethics: Non-ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 10, no. 2/3 (2004): 248.

<sup>21</sup>Mohler. (Accessed Oct. 1, 2014).

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. (Accessed Oct. 1, 2014).

Finally, God's plan for the resurrection and restoration of all things also incorporates the body. The redeemed will inhabit glorified bodies for eternity just as the Son of God lives eternally in a glorified body. Yet, some have hypothesized that Jesus' reference to believers no longer marrying in heaven because they will be like the angels (Matt. 22:30) infers that the redeemed will have genderless bodies. Grenz criticizes that hypothesis based on the fact that Jesus' glorified body retained a definitive gender:

If in the paradigm of the eschatological resurrection the external maleness of the Risen Jesus is preserved (albeit only as it is transformed) so that he remains physically recognizable, then how much more are the deeper characteristics of maleness/femaleness preserved (yet again only transformed) in the glorified state entered through the general resurrection at the consummation of history.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, Mohler indicates that while gender remains, sexual activity will cease since earthly marriage and reproduction are merely a shadow of a greater spiritual reality finally fulfilled:

In terms of our sexuality, while gender will remain in the new creation, sexual activity will not. It is not that sex is nullified in the resurrection; rather, it is fulfilled. The eschatological marriage supper of the Lamb, to which marriage and sexuality point, will finally arrive. No longer will there be any need to fill the earth with image-bearers as was the case in Genesis 1. Instead, the earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, sexual relations on earth serve to image the love relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church, which will ultimately find fulfillment at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-10). Even after God fulfills his mission, humans will retain their sexuality for all of eternity.

However, there exists an additional spiritual parallel: In the same way the heterosexual union images "unity-in-difference" and produces physical offspring as a result of that intimacy, spiritual offspring result from spiritual intimacy with Christ. First Corinthians 6:16-17 indicates that the believer who is united with the Lord is united with him in spirit, imaging "unity-in-difference." The end result of such a union should eventually produce spiritual offspring in the form of sons and daughters in the faith. For this reason, Jesus commanded his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations" and to "teach them" everything Jesus taught them the same way a parent would train a child toward maturity (Matt. 28:19).

The New Testament furthers the analogy of spiritual children by referring to new believers as "infants in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1, Heb. 5:12) and "newborn babes" who must "grow up in [their] salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2). Additionally, the apostle Paul says to his disciples, "I became your father through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15), and he compares the discipleship process to a mother nurturing her child: "Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you" (1 Thess. 2:7b-8a). In fact, Paul extends the analogy to childbirth: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you..." (Gal. 4:19). Hence, the New Testament illustrates a parallel between the intimacy of a human marriage that produces offspring that need parenting and the believer developing intimacy with Christ, which produces

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<sup>23</sup>Grenz, 26. (1997).

<sup>24</sup>Mohler. (Accessed Oct. 1, 2014).

spiritual children that must be discipled. However, when this age comes to a close, and Christ finally unites with his bride, the need for spiritual birthing and parenting will cease, for every believer will know Christ as they are fully known (1 Cor. 13:12), the final judgment will occur, and the need to win others to Christ and make disciples will no longer exist. In this way, both earthly marriage and spiritual birth/parenting foreshadow the fulfillment of *missio Dei* as Christ unites with his bride, after which the need for earthly marriage and spiritual birth/parenting will cease because the penultimate will have come. However, until that time, the human body—including human sexuality—serves as a shadow of the penultimate yet to come

## THE PURPOSE OF SEXUALITY

While human sexuality foreshadows the greater spiritual reality of Christ marrying his bride, God's purpose for creating sexuality transcends the physical body. Yet, that does not mean sexuality can be divorced from the body as pro-gay advocates assert. In 2011, the American Psychological Association (APA) published "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients" which makes distinctions between sex, gender, and sexual orientation. The guidelines define "sex" as "a person's biological status ... typically categorized as male, female," not to be confused with "gender" defined as "the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex." "Sexual orientation" "refers to the sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted."<sup>25</sup> Thus, according to the APA, one's biological sex could differ from one's gender or sexual orientation.

However, the Bible does not distinguish between sex, gender, and sexual orientation. In fact, the Scriptures never mention sexual orientation because it is presumed that heterosexuality is God's normative design for sexuality—anything outside of that constitutes an aberration. Consequently, to claim an orientation toward homosexuality would be akin to claiming an orientation toward lying, murder, incest, greed, or any other sinful behavior incongruent with God's design for humanity. As such, God designed one's biological sex (male or female) to align with one's gender (masculine or feminine) and their sexual attractions to fixate on the opposite sex. If an individual's sex, gender, and sexual attractions do not align with God's design, that indicates a deeper psychological/emotional issue for which the individual needs healing. Part 4 will address such dynamics in more detail.

### *What Is Sexuality?*

While the body plays an indispensable role in *missio Dei*—and sexuality cannot be divorced from the body—human sexuality involves more than mere bodily functions or sexual attractions. God's purpose for sexuality, how it manifests among those whose bodies lack sexual function, and the difference between human sexuality and animal sexuality demonstrate this reality.

As previously noted, God reveals Himself through human sexuality: "Sex is his self-disclosing picture window into the Almighty—His grand metaphor to teach the value he places on intimate relationships. God is love and sexuality gives us ways to understand this."<sup>26</sup> As such,

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<sup>25</sup>American Psychological Association, "Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients." <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/guidelines.aspx#>. (Accessed October 11, 2014).

<sup>26</sup>Douglas E. Rosenau, and Michael R. Sytsma, "A Theology of Sexual Intimacy: Insights into the Creator." *Journal of Psychology & Christianity* 23, no. 3 (2004): 263.

sexuality equates to more than a bodily function. Grenz contends that sexuality equates to a drive toward bonding, a quest for completion:

At the heart of human sexuality is embodiment, which includes the sexed body that marks a person as male or female and out of which other aspects of human existence emerge. Bound up with embodiment is the sense of incompleteness, coupled with the drive for completeness, that together lead to bonding. Sexuality, therefore, is the dynamic that draws human beings out of their individual isolation into relationships with others.<sup>27</sup>

Since the end goal of *missio Dei* consists of welcoming redeemed humanity into the Trinitarian community, sexuality, as Grenz defines it, plays an integral role in pulling humans out of isolation and into community with one another and with God. Hence, God purposes that sexuality lead toward relational bonding.

Second, the reality that sexuality involves more than physical sexual acts is evidenced by the fact that the drive toward relational bonding remains present in individuals whose body lack the capacity for sexual functioning.<sup>28</sup> For example, toddlers are sexual beings who seek completion in relationships despite the fact that they are incapable of sexual reproduction. The same holds true for the elderly whose reproductive capacity has ceased. Likewise, persons who for other reasons are incapable of sexual activity still remain gendered beings who long for connection in relationship, indicating sexuality involves more than the physical body alone.

Third, pro-gay advocates often cite examples of homosexual activity among animals to justify the same behavior in humans. However, human sexuality with its inherent drive toward bonding operates on an entirely different level than animal sexuality, as Bible expositor Grant Richison notes:

The sexuality of man is not identical to the sexuality of an animal. Man operates both in bodily function and with his person. God made man's personhood in his own image attendant with norms and standards. Animal operates in one dimension and man operates in two. A man operating in the single dimension of biology is a man devoid of God. Man operating within two dimensions needs to coronate those two dimensions under God; otherwise, he develops pathological sexual orientation.<sup>29</sup>

Hence, sexual activity that focuses on the body divorced from relationship violates God's design that involves body, soul, and spirit in the drive toward bonding. For instance, the "one flesh" union described in Genesis 2:24 refers to sexuality as more than the sexual act in marriage as evidenced by the fact that God created Eve in response to Adam's relational loneliness, "It is not good for the man to be alone. ...But for Adam no suitable helper was found"

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<sup>27</sup>Grenz, 301. (2001)

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 17. (1997)

<sup>29</sup>Grant Richison, "Theology of Sex." <http://versebyversecommentary.com/articles/theology-of-sex/> (Accessed October 9, 2014).

Aqw2 (Gen. 2:18, 20b). The Genesis account does not mention procreation in association with the “one flesh” union, thus making the emphasis solidarity rather than sexual function.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 alludes to sexuality involving the entirety of one’s temple, which is a body that houses the soul and the spirit. Consequently, to involve oneself with a prostitute and view sexuality as merely a physical function divorced from relational bonding equates to sinning against one’s own body, soul, and spirit—not to mention sinning against the Spirit of God which indwells the believer. Lisa Cahill, distinguished professor of theology and ethics at Boston College articulates the essence of viewing sexuality as merely a physical phenomenon:

Yet to void sex of all but ‘bodies and pleasures’...is...to identify the experiential unit too minimalistically, to cut off too quickly a complex and *intrinsically relational* dimension of human being. It is only when the reading of experience is individualistic—even adolescent—that the discovery of ‘sex’ is the discovery of sexual pleasure.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, minimizing sexuality to the sheer enjoyment of physical pleasure equates to a juvenile, individualistic mindset that falls short of God’s intention for sexuality, which he designed as the drive toward relational bonding that manifests among humans and foreshadows the greater spiritual reality of Christ and the Church.

### *Masculine and Feminine Relating*

In response to the current sexual crisis in the U.S., Larry Crabb, noted Christian psychologist and author, penned the book *Fully Alive: A Biblical View of Gender that Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes* in which he posits that sexuality goes beyond the physical body and affects the way men and women relate differently. In other words, Crabb contends that God designed men to relate in a decidedly masculine way and women to relate in a decidedly feminine way. At first glance, Crabb’s assertions appear to reinforce cultural stereotypes, which have no biblical basis. As Gagnon notes, men are masculine “by virtue of their sex, not by virtue of possessing a social construct of masculinity that may or may not reflect true masculinity.”<sup>3</sup> The converse applies to women whose sex makes them feminine regardless of whether they adhere to social constructs of femininity. However, upon further examination, Crabb’s assertions align with Gagnon’s definition, which bases masculinity/femininity solely on sex apart from cultural constructs. Crabb grounds his assertions upon the etymology of the original Hebrew words for male and female in the creation account. Gwen Sayler, professor of Hebrew at Wartburg Seminary, confirms Crabb’s conclusion regarding the meaning of “male” and “female” in Genesis 1:

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<sup>1</sup>Grenz, 278. (2001).

<sup>2</sup>Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics, New Studies in Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110-111.

<sup>3</sup>Robert A. J Gagnon, "Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity." *Journal of Psychology & Christianity* 24 no. 4 (2005), 300.

Like their near-eastern and Greek counterparts, the priestly authors assume that penetration is the essence of sexual intercourse. Men are penetrating agents. Women are penetrated recipients of male activity. The centrality of these male/female categories for priestly anthropology is evident in the terms used to describe the creation of humanity in Genesis 1:27: “So God created humanity (adam) in God’s image: male (*zakar*) and female (*neqbah*) God created them.” The Hebrew word *zakar* also means “memory.” The male is the one through whom memory passes; he is the active memory-making agent. The Hebrew word *neqbah* means “hole, orifice bearer.” The female is the one whose hole is penetrated by the memory maker. She is the passive recipient, subordinate to the active male. From the priestly perspective, these distinctions—what we would term gender role categories—are imbedded in creation itself.<sup>4</sup>

Sayler, like Crabb, deduces that masculinity and femininity are embedded in human beings by virtue of their sex. However, Sayler arrives at a different conclusion than Crabb, arguing that the distinctions between men and women no longer apply under the new covenant, making homosexual practice acceptable for the Christian. Crabb, on the other hand, argues that gender distinctions remain a foundational part of humanity: “Femininity or masculinity is so irrevocably and irreversibly embedded in our being that no one can accurately say, “I am first a person and then male or female.”<sup>5</sup> “We are not only image-bearing persons,”<sup>6</sup> contends Crabb, “we are gendered image-bearing persons.”<sup>7</sup> Gender is so deeply embedded in human beings that it affects the way men and women relate to others in uniquely different ways. Crabb pulls from Grenz’s writings on the Trinitarian mission to reconcile humans and invite them into divine community and posits the question, “Did God create us as image-bearing males and females so that men and women could each reveal, by the way we relate, something of the wonder of how the persons of the Trinity relate?”<sup>8</sup>

The remainder of Crabb’s book expands on the notion that God designed men as “memory makers” to move toward women—not just sexually but relationally—as a reflection God’s initiative to move toward lost humanity to reconcile them to Himself. Likewise, Crabb writes, God created women as ones who welcome movement toward them—not just in a sexual way but relationally—as a reflection of God who warmly welcomes redeemed humans to join in the divine community. Crabb’s assertions offer thought-provoking insights into the relational differences between men and women, supporting the conclusion that sexuality permeates humanity beyond the physical into the relational realm.

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<sup>4</sup>Gwen B. Sayler, "Beyond the Biblical Impasse: Homosexuality Through the Lens of Theological Anthropology." *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 44, no. 1(2005): 82.

<sup>5</sup>Larry Crabb, *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender that Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 21.

<sup>6</sup>Crabb, 27.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Crabb, 28.

*Marriage and Singleness as Images of God's Love*

In addition to the relational uniqueness between males and females, the way sexuality manifests in relationships among both married and single people uniquely images the love of God. As Grenz notes, “In a sense, our sexuality pervades all our relationships. We constantly relate to others as male or female. And our relationships to persons of the same-sex differ from our relationships to the opposite sex.”<sup>9</sup> For example, a marriage relationship images God’s desire to form a community based on “exclusive love and fidelity to covenant,”<sup>10</sup> paralleling God’s desire for bride that relates exclusively to her Bridegroom on the basis of blood covenant. However, God’s design for the human marital covenant to produce offspring, creating the potential to open their relationship to others beyond themselves, reflects God’s willingness to open his exclusive relationship and invite more disciples (i.e. spiritual offspring) to join in exclusive relationship with him. In contrast to the exclusivity of the marital covenant, singleness manifests God’s all-inclusive love: “The less formal bonding of singles reflects the openness of the divine love to the continual expansion of the circle of love to include within its circle those yet outside its boundaries. In short, the single life can express the divine reality as characterized by a love that seeks relationship (community) not exclusively.”<sup>11</sup> In short, the nature of relationships among singles reflects God’s desire to welcome “whosoever will” into the divine community.

In these ways, sexuality goes beyond the physical sex act and pervades the very nature of relationships between men and women—whether married or single—as a reflection of God’s penultimate love reflected in *missio Dei*. Grenz aptly articulates God’s end goal: “Sexuality is the sense of incompleteness together with the quest for wholeness that provides the impulse—the drive toward bonding. This impulse leads ultimately to the eschatological community that constitutes the new humanity in fulfillment of God’s intentions from the beginning.”<sup>12</sup>

**IMPLICATIONS FOR SEXUAL PRACTICE**

God’s design for sexuality to image the Trinity and point to the greater spiritual reality of the union of Christ and the Church has direct implications on sexual practice. As Angus Hunter notes in his book, *From Venus to Mars and Back*, God did not create sexuality with morality (i.e. rules to follow) in mind; he created sexuality to image the relational mystery of the trinity, with the ultimate goal that redeemed humans would be vessels of God’s divine presence. Only the heterosexual marriage covenant images God’s ultimate goal of relationship with his creation.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, homosexual behavior does not align with *missio Dei* because a same-sex union cannot image “unity-in-difference” and therefore cannot parallel the concept of spiritual birth and parenting in the kingdom, nor can it image the ultimate fulfillment of the marriage of the Lamb.

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<sup>9</sup>Grenz, 22, (1997).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 195, (1997).

<sup>11</sup>Grenz, 195, (1997).

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 283, (2001).

<sup>13</sup>Angus N. Hunter, *From Venus to Mars and Back: What It Means to Be You* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Pub., 2009), 91.



Additionally, the notion that one can identify as a “gay Christian” conflicts with God’s purpose for sexuality. As previously mentioned, one cannot divorce the body from sexuality nor can the soul and spirit be divorced from the body. Thus, if a person finds that his or her biological sex, gender identity, and sexual attractions do not align with God’s intended design, it indicates the presence of emotional deficits in the soul which have affected normal psychological and sexual development. Psychologist Elizabeth Moberly explains how same-sex attractions result from emotional deficits that become sexualized:

In the homosexual condition, psychological needs that are essentially pre-adult remain in a person who is in other respects adult. Homosexual activity implies the eroticization of deficits in growth that remain outstanding, and this is, fundamentally, a confusion of the emotional needs of the non-adult with the physiological desires of the adults.<sup>14</sup>

At its root, homosexuality equates to an emotional need that manifests in a sexual way. The solution, therefore, is not to embrace a gay identity—even if one insists on practicing celibacy as a “gay Christian”—but rather to seek to resolve the emotional deficits that precipitate same-sex attractions. Thus, rather than encouraging believers to identify as “gay Christians,” the Church ought to grow in its expertise to address the emotional deficits which contribute to homoerotic desires.<sup>15</sup>

The current sexual crisis can be traced to the root of viewing sexuality as merely a physical function of the body apart from the dynamic of relational bonding and the drive toward completion. As Grenz notes, “Disengaged from relationship and consequence, sex has become a freestanding activity engaged in solely for the purpose of pleasure.”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, marriage no longer exists as a “public institution for the common good” but rather serves as “a private arrangement for the satisfaction of the individuals.”<sup>17</sup> Such a view contradicts God’s greater purpose for sexuality as the drive toward bonding which pulls individuals out of isolation into relationship with one another and, ultimately, into relationship with their Creator. Justification for homosexuality stems from the same root: “homoerotic desire is sexual narcissism”<sup>18</sup> (Gagnon 2005, 300) which discounts God’s greater purpose for sexuality in the context of *missio Dei*. A homosexual union cannot produce more image bearers, cannot image “unity-in-difference,” and cannot foreshadow the ultimate relationship between Christ and his bride. Therefore, the Scriptures forbid homosexual practice not simply as a religious rule but because homosexuality maligns *imago Dei* and does not align with *missio Dei*.

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<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth R. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic* (Guernsey, Channel Islands: The Guernsey Press, 2001), 20.

<sup>15</sup>For an in depth analysis, see Seiler’s master’s thesis “Compassion without Compromise: A Christian Response to Homosexuality” (2014, AGTS) which addresses emotional deficits that contribute to same-sex attractions and discusses how the Church can help those who struggle with homoerotic desires.

<sup>16</sup>Grenz, 10, (1997).

<sup>17</sup>Timothy J. Keller, and Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 21.

<sup>18</sup>Gagnon, 300, (2005).

## CONCLUSION

The Church must rise to the challenge to respond to the current sexual crisis with sound theology. Rather than defaulting to the “concordance reflex,” which pro-gay advocates can divert with crafty contortions of Scripture, Christians must address homosexuality in the context of a missional hermeneutic by explaining how homosexual practice maligns *imago Dei*, which God purposed to image the Trinitarian mystery of “unity-in-difference” and reveal the transcendent nature of God in gendered imagery understandable to humans. In addition to maligning *imago Dei*, homosexual practice proves incongruent with *missio Dei*, as a homosexual union cannot produce offspring and therefore fails to image spiritual birth/parenting and cannot foreshadow the ultimate reality of “unity-in-difference” fulfilled by Christ and the Church. Additionally, homoerotic desire equates to sexual narcissism, which minimizes sexual behavior to a means of meeting one’s personal needs rather than submitting to God’s design for sexuality, imaging his love in all aspects of relationship whether married or single, and participating in *missio Dei*. Thus, to categorize homosexual practice as sin and embrace God’s heterosexual design for *imago Dei* in the overall context of *missio Dei* constitutes worship in its deepest sense.

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## COMPARING APPLES AND MANGOES: TOWARDS EVALUATING THE AAGA MISSIONS ENTREPRISE<sup>1</sup>

Enson Mbilikile Lwesya<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

In the last few years, there has been a rumbling of frustration and at times outright criticism of the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance<sup>3</sup> (AAGA) missionary enterprise by a new generation of missionaries from Assemblies of God World Missions<sup>4</sup> (AGWM).<sup>5</sup> Some of these young ministers regard the inspirational missional instruction framed in organizations such as Eleventh Hour Institute (EHI), Acts in Africa (AIA) and the World Missions Commissions (WMC) as mere rhetoric. Interestingly, some of the fiercest critics have been part of the process of the development of Africa's missions in the last twenty years. However, in their estimation, they see that the zeal of missions from the African Church is misplaced, the action is absent and it is all fluff. Furthermore, missionary mobilization and deployment are seen not to be commensurate to the missional "preachings" from within the continent.

### *Basis of the Criticism*

The 1990's ushered in a new zest for church planting and missions for the Assemblies of God. The Decade of Harvest, a continent-wide strategic movement pushed, persuaded and challenged the AG-Africa to plant more churches.<sup>6</sup> By 1997, the call for the formation of the Eleventh Hour Institute (EHI) and the East Africa Regional Missions Board (RMB) became examples and a culmination of different streams of missionary thought and action across the continent. During this time, the number of members and adherents increased from 2 million to about 13 Million at the close of that decade. The incremental realization of the growing Church

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<sup>1</sup> A version of this article was published under the same title in *Power for Mission: The Africa Assemblies of God Mobilizing to Reach the Nations*, edited by Miller and Enson Lwesya (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this article Assemblies of God constituency in Africa is abbreviated as AG-Africa.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this article Assemblies of God constituency in America is abbreviated as AG-America.

<sup>5</sup> Older Statesmen such as Dr. Lazarus Chakwera, Dr. Charles Osweke, Dr. Peter Njiri, and others received the harshest criticism.

<sup>6</sup> Decade of Harvest was an Assemblies of God (America) initiated grand strategy to see the greatest evangelistic results through church planting throughout the world. AG-Africa grew from 2 million members and adherents to about 13 million.

and its place in the economy of God's cosmic business persuaded many Africans to believe that Africa could equally be a bonafide player in the missions enterprise.

The EHI and RMB were officially launched and mobilized with initial missionaries from Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>7</sup> West Africa experienced sparks of cross-border mission zeal and activities. Nigeria sent missionaries to Cameroon and Niger, while Burkina Faso sent missionaries into Ivory Coast and other West African nations. The theological education systems, largely responsible for ministerial formation, grew stronger and more visionary. Graduate study centers were instituted in five countries to buttress the successful undergraduate schools the Assemblies of God operated for some time.<sup>8</sup> The numbers of members and adherents increased from 2 Million to 13 million during the time. However, with the celebrations of the year 2000, it seems the evangelism emphasis in many national churches stagnated, the inspirational energy zapped, missionary passion and creativity ran out and the many creative promises were soon relegated only to future hopes. Seemingly, the Decade of Harvest benefits did not catapult the AG-Africa to greater missional involvement and expansion. From this vantage point, critics look at the AG-Africa missionary enterprise as foamy promises and great rhetoric but when it comes to actions, its only bare tokenism.

But is the criticism valid? Is there any proof of a missionary enterprise forming let alone growing in AG-Africa? This paper stands on the premise that although the criticism is welcome, however most of it is misplaced and misguided for it compares and contrasts, and wrongly so, the AG-Africa missions with various movements in history. The comparisons are in fact diametrically wrong; it is like comparing apples to mangos while assuming they are the same. The ensuing sections of this paper show how the AG-Africa missions differs with other historical and contemporary missions movements. Furthermore, it surveys the different challenges it faces and above all it attempts to develop a measuring yardstick or a canon for effective and growing missionary enterprises.

### **The Missionary Task of the Church**

Having stated the above, it behooves us to point out the perceived Church's Task. Confusion on defining and describing the mission of God leads to confusion in execution of tasks. Failure to biblically frame a definition and description of what is missions and evangelism obstructs the execution of the same. Defining Missions, surprisingly, is both difficult and contentious. Various Church-related mission documents of the last four decades—Lausanne Covenant (1974), the World Council of Churches' Nairobi Assembly statement on "Confessing Christ Today" (1975) and the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntandi* (1975)—attest to this

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<sup>7</sup>The RMB was initially established to become an agency to organize and supervise the missionaries from the East Africa block of Assemblies of God national Churches. Initially, Malawi sent three missionary couples to Sudan, Kenya sent one couple to Sudan, whereas Tanzania one couple to Rwanda. This was a great start. However, National leaders underestimated the power of sovereignty in the national churches as opposed to participation in an association that has less legal cohesion. The results were not good. Eventually each missionary was left to the national churches to support in contrast to the original idea of mobilizing funds from all regional nations to support all regional missionaries.

<sup>8</sup>Graduate Schools were opened in Lome (Togo), Capetown (South Africa), Nairobi (Kenya), Lilongwe (Malawi) and Jos (Nigeria).

challenge.<sup>9</sup> As in any form of Christian practice, a level of reflection is essential in developing descriptions and definitions for missions. Unfortunately, missional reflection is enshrined in space and time; therefore, it comes with human limitations. To this end, Bosch states that we should never arrogate it to ourselves to delineate mission too sharply and too self-confidently. Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections. The most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about.<sup>10</sup>

One distinctive missional practice shown in the last few decades is to differentiate mission (singular), also known as *missio Dei*, from missions (plural). Mission (singular) refers to the belief and practice that God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privilege to participate. Whereas missions would refer to the particular forms, related to specific times, places, or needs of participation in *missio Dei*.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, other scholars have tried to separate evangelism, semantically and practically, from mission.

Evangelism is perceived as separate but part of missions. It is the proclamation of salvation in Christ to those who do not believe in him, calling them to repentance and conversion, announcing forgiveness of sin and inviting them to become living members of Christ's earthly community and to begin a life of service to others in the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> This is the activity of the Church in the earth. Consequently, the missionary task is looked upon as the whole church bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.<sup>13</sup> With this thought comes awareness that the church is not the sender but the one sent. Its mission (being sent) is not secondary to its being; the church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission.<sup>14</sup> The foregone reflections have shaped the perceptions of missions in various church communities of the world.

### *Biblical Groundings*

God created humanity with the capacity to know and represent him. In declaring man as His co-regent with the capacity to dominate and subdue the earth, God endows humanity with the ability to care for the earth on his behalf. Unfortunately, humanity falls in sin and receives an

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<sup>9</sup>For a fuller review of the documents see James Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (ed), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization I: Basic Statements 1974-1991* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).

<sup>10</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 9.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 10-11. The Conciliar Ecumenical Statements and the Evangelical Protestant Statements of the last four decades all reveal the same essence of differences and connection between Missions and Evangelism.

<sup>13</sup>This statement is indeed a summarization of many statements of many International Missionary Conferences. However, these words are a summary from "Confessing Christ Today", A statement from the World Council of Church's Fifth Assembly held in Nairobi in 1975.

<sup>14</sup>Karl Bath, *Church Dogmatics IV/1* (Edinburgh: T & T, 1956), 725.

eternal impact; but inversely God sets in motion his eternal remedy (Rev. 13:8) and continues to pursue human beings with his love. Through his wise counsel, God reveals the way of salvation epitomized by the death of Jesus Christ. In dying, Jesus becomes humanity's substitute (2 Cor. 5: 21). Just as the sin of Adam is imputed to all, the righteousness of Jesus is promised to all who appropriate his finished work on the Cross. Additionally, Jesus founds the Church, a community of people from all nations, tribes, languages and peoples who commit themselves to do his bidding of which the major responsibility is working as a missionary community of God. The Church's work of sharing the good news of the redemptive activity of God, also known as the mission of God is the centre or the *mitte* of all Scriptures.

With simplicity and clear vision, Jesus mobilized a community to fulfill his goals. Indeed, mission dictates developing a missionary community. His vision of spreading the redemptive good news needed a community of workers. Therefore, Jesus starts a movement, consequently, develop it into a world-wide community. This community is to carry on His mission. The African Church, including the AG family, is part of this New Testament Spirit-community. Just as the apostolic church in the New Testament text relies on the power of the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to UPGs, similarly, the African Church is called to depend on him, the Spirit, to do missions.

### *Apostolic Roots and Future Missions*

The action of the Spirit in setting Barnabas and Paul apart and influencing the Antioch Community "sending them" creates a normative of missions with a strong emphasis on local church plants (Acts 13:1-5). Everywhere this apostolic team goes, it preaches and mobilizes converts together who in turn grow those congregations into communities where the word is taught, people matured and ultimately plant other churches (Acts 14:21-28). The New Testament missions movement as depicted in Paul's missionary movements becomes the grounding for all missionary endeavors of the future. Thus, the Acts of the Apostles informs what the church does thereafter.

Theological reflection is always circumscribed in contextual issues. And this has been the greatest challenge of practicing theology anywhere in the world. Self-theologizing, which inevitably leads to contextualization is always messy, it does not satisfy everyone. Here then is the biggest challenge in missions work: Most of the missionary movements in the world, including the AG-Africa missionary enterprise are viewed and evaluated through a missiology fashioned in America. Consequently, the New Testament missionary stories are interpreted using the American missiology grid, which is itself a reflection of its own context. Instead of Africa developing its own missiology through a rigorous reflection of the acts of God in context, it relies on the philosophy already developed by others. In a way, Africa tries to fight Goliath using Saul's armor.

Admittedly, missions from the African soil has not picked up speed as desired by many due to reasons such as lack of commitment, lack of vision, passion, poor management of missions organizations and sheer fear of going to unreached people groups (UPGs).<sup>15</sup> However,

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<sup>15</sup>A "people group" is a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation etc. or combinations of these. From the viewpoint of evangelization this is the largest possible group within which the gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance. An "unreached people group" is a people among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers of resources to evangelize the rest of its members without



this paper stands on an hypothesis that missions in Africa has not picked up aggressively because it is trapped by a Western Missiology not suited for the continent. And therefore, as the missiology changes by aligning with the New Testament, then the missional movement will rapidly grow.

### *Was Apostle Paul a Cross-Cultural Missionary?*

At the heart of the strong criticism against the AG-Africa is the notion that Africa is largely practicing non-authentic missions—inside-country evangelism. Based on the Northern Hemisphere understanding (strong among AG-America), a missionary is one who crosses cultural barriers to bring the gospel to others. What constitutes the barrier may include elements such as language, color, ethnicity, etc. Therefore, in this regard missions is taking the gospel across these barriers to those who have not yet heard. It is going to the unreached, beyond the cultural frontiers. To a certain degree, this also has an element of *going far, beyond easy geographical reach*; because among missiologists that advocate the crossing of cultural barriers, there is a tendency *not to call* those who cross barriers within the same geopolitical boundaries of a nation as “missionaries”. Such workers are regularly called church planters. Consequently, despite the tens of thousands of churches the AG-Africa planted in the last twenty years, of which many were across distinct cultures, the Church is still deemed involved largely in Church planting and not missions work. But is this a correct reading of the New Testament? Was the New Testament Mission across cultures? Was Paul and his apostolic teams *missionary* in the light of the foregone definitions and descriptions?

Paul’s personal cultural orientation was similar to most of all the provinces he took the apostolic teams. Although the Romans had by this time ruled for over 150 years, the Greek empire of Alexander the Great and his posterity forever framed Asia Minor and Western Europe in the Greek culture. The Greek culture and language dictated and influenced the life of all the people in the Roman Empire. Paul and his apostolic team members (most of them) were born and bred in this culture. Although born a Jew, Paul was raised in Tarsus of Cilicia, a city with a Greek culture.<sup>16</sup> Bruce states that whereas Paul is frequently described nowadays as a Hellenistic Jew, but he himself would probably not have accepted that description. If he calls himself a “Hebrew” (2 Corinthians 11:22) or, more emphatically, “a Hebrew born of Hebrews” (Philippians 3:6), he probably uses the word in contradistinction to “Hellenist” as Luke himself does in another connection in Acts 6:1.<sup>17</sup>

However, one thing is clear from the records of the Acts of the Apostles: Paul is a practical apostle who uses his double cultural orientation to the advantage of preaching of the gospel. He is a citizen of two nations, Israel and Rome, and a person of two cultures. Paul understood both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. He was at least bilingual, probably trilingual. He was evidently able to function comfortably, without consciously ‘crossing over’

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outside (cross-cultural) assistance. A ‘reached people group’ with adequate indigenous believers and resources to evangelize this group without outside (cross-cultural) assistance.

<sup>16</sup>Paul was a man of two cultures (Hebrew and Greek) and two nations (Israel and Rome). He was bilingual and extremely talented and passionate about taking the gospel to where Christ was not known.

<sup>17</sup>F.F. Bruce, St. Luke’s Portrait of St. Paul. Available on [http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ffb/luke-portrait\\_bruce.pdf](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ffb/luke-portrait_bruce.pdf) (accessed on January 2, 2013).

into one or the other culture, both in Jewish and in Greco-Roman culture.”<sup>18</sup> But as it turns out, Paul went to places where he would be most effective, where he spoke the language, where he could earn a decent living, where he would be sure to meet people with whom he was already familiar.<sup>19</sup>

The Greek cultural tapestry—despite shades of differences in most sub-cultural pockets of the Roman Empire—supported the life of the first century. Therefore, discussing Paul’s missionary life forces us to ask critical questions: How many cultural barriers did Paul cross when he went in all these nations and cities? How much culture did the apostolic teams cross knowing that Greek was the language of Asia Minor and West Europe or that the cultural tapestry was Greek and dictated by its morals and rituals? Did Paul really cross significant cultural barriers from what he was? No, he did not cross culture as we may know it today. The Greek culture presented Paul with a medium of communication. He was at home in this language. The biblical text does not present evidence of any attempt to translate the scriptures into the provincial dialects of Asia Minor by the apostolic teams during their missionary travels.

Paul preached in Greek and wrote in Greek and all his converts who read were all expected to read the scriptures in Greek.<sup>20</sup> If he did not cross culture barriers, can we call him a missionary using our western missiology that demands one to “cross cultures”? Should the “crossing of culture” motif be a determining factor or the fact of “being sent” by the Lord to preach the word to a people without his knowledge? Schnabel states that moreover, the determining characteristic of the apostles and other missionaries in the New Testament period is not the need to learn other languages or to cross cultural divides. Rather they are characterized by Jesus’ call and commission to proclaim the good news of God’s saving action to all people, Jews and Greeks, no matter where they lived—whether in the same city, in the neighboring region or in another Roman Province.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Synagogue Factor*

Paul’s desire to get to a synagogue reveals another important ingenious missionary practice. His missionary work in most cities always began at the synagogue. Whenever he entered a city, he went straight to this place of worship. There he found kinship of language, faith, and Scripture with the worshipers. Invariably, he was rejected and thrown out whenever he preached the gospel in the synagogues. First, threatened Jewish leaders rejected him each time he preached in the synagogues on the basis that he was bringing a new faith. However, by their own admission, the majority recipients in every synagogue he visited did not think Paul’s message was not necessarily alien to them. Paul visited the synagogue to introduce himself to folks who believed like him. Intentionally, he sought out people of similar culture and belief.

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<sup>18</sup>Eckhard Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 329.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Rolland Allen, 14.

<sup>21</sup>Echard J. Schnabel, 439.

*Paul and the Metropolises*

Roland Allen in his seminal book *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours* clearly demonstrates that although Paul constantly viewed his mission work through the eyes of provinces rather than cities, his theory of evangelizing a province was not to preach in every place himself, but to establish centers of Christian life in two or three important places from which the knowledge might spread into the country round.<sup>22</sup> Strategically, the Spirit leads Paul into centers from which he might begin; not centers into which life drains but centers from which it spreads abroad. He concentrates on the district or provincial capitals, each of which stands for a whole region.<sup>23</sup> Most of these centers are of Roman Administration, of Hellenic civilization and of Jewish influence. They are keys of the great trade routes.<sup>24</sup> Paul thinks regionally, not ethnically; he chooses cities that have a representative character. In each of these he lays the foundations for a Christian community, clearly in the hope that, from these strategic centers, the gospel will be carried into surrounding country side and towns.<sup>25</sup>

*Was Jesus a Missionary of God?*

By the same token, can we call Jesus a missionary using the “crossing of culture” motif? Jesus does not cross any significant culture because he ministers within the cultural environment of his birth and upbringing. He came to his own; and he ministered to his own (John 1:10-11). He spoke Aramaic within a Greek Cultural milieu to people same as he. Of course, some may argue that his home is heaven and he came as a missionary into the earth. Well, that thinking negates the fact of his birth, identity and upbringing as a Jew born in Israel. However, we describe him, Jesus is a missionary with an apostolic mandate. No wonder he declares “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20: 21 NASB).

Jesus considers His mission all-consuming to His life. He articulates it, demonstrates it by His life and deeds, and passes the same to His mission coalition—the apostles. He comes “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Lucan literature, like other biblical genres, links the narratives of Jesus and the apostolic church in the redemptive scope and history of humanity. Luke believes in the unity and harmony of inspired Scriptures, the massive quotes from the Old Testament demonstrate this fact.<sup>26</sup> He, deliberately, connects the new acts of God done in his day to the acts of God he reads in the text (Old Testament). Thus, Luke shows that Jesus sees himself as the Servant, Prophet, and King sent from Yahweh (Luke 4:18) to bring light into the world through the proclamation of the gospel and the provision of acts of mercy as empowered by the Spirit. He is heaven’s missionary to earth. Yet, he is from among the earth. He is the Son of Man, born from man, sent to man.

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<sup>22</sup>Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids, MI: World Dominion Press, 1962), 12.

<sup>23</sup>David J. Bosch, 130.

<sup>24</sup>Roland Allen, 16.

<sup>25</sup>David J. Bosch, 130.

<sup>26</sup>Larry D. Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 20.

*Were Apostles Missionaries?*

The contemporary apostolic reformation movements challenge both the theological presuppositions and practices of contemporary evangelical mission activities and thereby, force the church to redefine the word “missionary.”<sup>27</sup> The English word “apostle,” a transliteration of the Greek *apostolos* derives from *apostellein*, to send.<sup>28</sup> The word “apostle” means “one sent.” Its meaning is kindred to the word “ambassador” (2 Cor. 5:20), the messenger whom a king sent to foreign powers, and also to our modern word “missionary,” which equally means “one sent.” The word “apostle” is translated “messenger” in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. It came to mean one who is sent on a specific mission and acts with full authority on behalf of the sender. What do these apostles do in biblical narrative to warrant the use of this term?

In the biblical text, the apostles are learners and itinerant evangelists. Later, their main duties are preaching, teaching, and administration.<sup>29</sup> This is the niche the contemporary apostolic reformation exploits in which the apostles are defined as fathers, mentors, and supervisors of other ministers. Despite the gospel’s advance across the cultural borders of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Damascus, Antioch, and the rest of Asia Minor, the apostles are not defined by their crossing of any of these cultural barriers, for they minister within the confinement of their cultures, but it is the essence *being sent* and leadership responsibility thrust on them that defines them as apostles. In those days, every one ministered wherever they went. Philip, running away from the persecution in Jerusalem, ministers Christ cross-culturally to Samaritans. Interestingly, Luke refers to Philip, who is likely a Gentile (by reason of his name) and crosses cultures to preach in Samaria, as an evangelist” and not as an “apostle” (Acts 8:4-8; 21:8). Could it be that these definitions are more bound by the descriptions of people’s *giftedness* instead of the ability to cross cultural barriers? The Jerusalem apostles and Paul do not just measure up to the contemporary definition of a missionary!

In the scriptures *everyone* is sent to preach the gospel. Jesus sends the apostles to evangelize within Israel on two occasions (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-17). Later on He commands His community to go out to proclaim the goodness of the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). In the Acts of the Apostles, all kinds of people go out to preach. Despite the giftedness, prophets, teachers and evangelists all go out as missionaries (Acts 8:4-8; 11:19-24; 15:31-33). Some even evangelize as they run from persecution. The emphasis is not on which person goes for mission, but that the church goes out to accomplish God’s work. Everyone is a minister and, in this sense, every member of the Jesus community is sent out as missionaries into the entire world to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20).

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<sup>27</sup>Apostolic Reformation movements are contemporary ministerial networks demanding the recognition of “apostles” as a legitimate category of New Testament ministries such as pastors, evangelists, and teachers, which are fully recognized and appreciated by the Church. The difficulties, however, evolve from the definitions, descriptions, identity, and authority of the present day apostles.

<sup>28</sup>Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Carl F. Henry, eds., *Wycliff Dictionary of Theology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 57.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

*What Then is Missions?*

Luke 24:47-48 gives the twin themes of proclamation and witness. Whether presented as “proclamation” (*kērussō*), “announcement of good news” (*euangelizomai*, cf. *katangellō*) or “witness” (*martureō* and cognates), the missionary’s primary activity is to tell “the truth to the world about God’s action in Christ. Precisely then, all things considered, missions should be the conscious effort on the part of the church, in its corporate capacity, or through voluntary agencies, to proclaim the gospel (and all it implies) among peoples and regions where it is still unknown or only inadequately known. Missions is not only a department of the church, but the church itself in its complete expression, that is, in its identification of itself with the world.

Others insist (especially out of AG-America) on the following working definition of missions: it is the establishment of Christ’s work across cultural and language barriers, with planting a church for that culture as the main thrust. Evangelism on the other hand, is the process and activity of reaching out to a people among which the Church of Jesus Christ already exists. Evangelism includes church growth activities in a place where the gospel has been for some time. However, it does seem that the boundaries of the two disciplines—missions and evangelism—are superficial and cannot be substantiated by biblical reflection as demonstrated above in the discussion on the Pauline form of missions. Therefore, missions should be perceived as global evangelization, a concept Jesus wished the Church followed to the letter.

The Frontier mission movement advocates that Christian World Mission is the redemptive activities of the church in societies where the church is not found.<sup>30</sup> Thus a missionary is one who crosses out of a society that has an existing church movement over cultural boundaries to bring the gospel to a society that does not have the church. They maintain a sharp distinction between *evangelism*, which is the work of the church among its own people in the same cultural group, and *mission*, which means crossing a cultural boundary to bring an initial penetration of the gospel among a cultural group. These cultural boundaries that must be crossed in order to bring the gospel to a new group become the new “frontiers” of mission, which is where the name of this movement is taken from.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Ralph Winter who initiated the Frontier Missions philosophy through his 1974 Lausanne presentation expresses missions as evangelization using what is now popularly known as the E-Scale. According to Winter the master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus an E-1 witness with it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from the outside are still essential and highly urgent.<sup>32</sup> What Winter strives to point out is that in the missiological reality of today, most “missionaries” in this narrow sense who are crossing real cultural boundaries do so in order to work among a culture where there is an already existing church movement of some

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<sup>30</sup>Ralph Winter, “The Meaning of ‘Mission,’” *Mission Frontiers Bulletin* (March-April 1998), 15.

<sup>31</sup>Alan Johnson, “The Frontier Mission Movement’s Understanding of the Modern Mission: Part 1” *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (18:2 Summer 2001), 82.

<sup>32</sup>Ralph Winter, “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 220.

sort. This he terms “regular” missions, which is involved in all kinds of good work of assisting the growing national church. These include doing works of compassion, training leaders and discipling new believers. The term “frontier” is then reserved for another kind of cross-cultural work, the kind where there is no existing church movement among a particular people.<sup>33</sup>

Agreed, for the sake of organized and planned church work, the two practices may need individual emphasis. Although missions can be deemed a form of world evangelization, cross-cultural evangelism (Missions), which Ralph Winter calls E-2 and E-3 have segregated emphasis. If mission, which is the more challenging of the two, is less emphasized, the church generally downplays it. The Church tends to evangelize people it is familiar with, whose languages it knows, and whose environment it appreciates. Thus, it may be necessary to accept the contentious descriptions and demarcations because the practical implications outweigh the debate over theological terminologies.

### *Rethinking Our Definitions*

The deconstruction of the “Crossing Culture” motif is significant on three accounts. First, it then reveals that our definitions and descriptions of who is a missionary are not necessarily biblically controlled. The realization is disheartening because then, the endeared term of missionary, whose etymology comes from Latin rather than Greek, could be the cause of many fragmented views of apostolic work. Second, it brings us to a realization that missions may not be necessarily crossing cultures. However, it may include traveling longer distances and crossing “geographical” boundaries and minister to people who may have or not have a culture like that of a missionary. Paul is indeed a missionary in Ephesus where the Greek Culture and language, which is equally his, dictates the life of the city. Similarly, an African who preaches and starts a church in London among Africans is no less a missionary.

Third, it equally challenges the grounds of his *being sent* by the Antioch Church. What does it mean to “being sent” in this regard? The sending theology is a belief and practice of mobilizing personnel and funds for missions; it is a concept that has grown with distinction through Western Missions. Evidently, a missionary has a community from home that recognizes him as their representative to the nations. Through this community, prayer and financial support is raised for the missionary. Mwamvani claims that there is an adequate inference that the Antioch church is such a sending base for the Paul’s apostolic teams. He states that Acts 13:1–4 which confirms and amplifies the apostolic motif as earlier practiced by Jesus (John 20:21) also etymologically reveals the basis for the sending structure. Although the English translations for verses 3 and 4 both use the word “sent”, the Greek rendering for the word used in verse 3 is “*apolouo*”, which means “to free fully or dismiss” (cf. Matt. 14:22; Mark 8:9; Luke 8:38), while verse 4 uses “*ekpempo*”, meaning “to dispatch or send forth” (cf. Acts 17:10)<sup>34</sup> This shows that the Holy Spirit (God) sent forth Saul and Barnabas, while the church set them free to go.

Furthermore, in Mwamvani’s estimation the reception of the apostles on their return journeys reveals the church’s responsibility and participation in the sending of the apostles. Just as Jesus prepares a debriefing time for his disciples whenever they get back from ministry (Luke

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<sup>33</sup>Alan Johnson, “Major Concepts in Frontier Missions: Part 2”, *International Journal of Frontier Missions* (18:2 Summer 2001), 90.

<sup>34</sup>Milward Mwamvani, *Misssionary Care: How Is The Two-Thirds-World Church Doing?* Vo.3 Issue 1. Available on <http://www.antsonline.org/Vol1111a4.html>. (Accessed on 01 January 2013).

10:1 – 20), Saul and Barnabas also go back for debriefing to their “sending” church (cf. Acts 14:26 – 28). With these references, he deduces that there is some kind of continuous link and care for the “sent” by the “senders.”<sup>35</sup> I still insist, however, that this philosophy and practice of a missionary’s support coming from the home church is equally informed by the pragmatic experiences of Western Missions. Although Paul strongly believes in a sending community for missionaries (Rom.10: 13-15) there is no scriptural evidence that the Antioch Church (the sending base) provides any financial support other than becoming a community of rest and accountability.

Granted, they could have supported his apostolic team, but Luke or Paul do not write about it, nor refer to it in a minimalist sense. What we get from his tentmaking texts is his passion to raise funds for the gospel outreaches (Acts 18:3; 1Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8; 2 Cor. 11:8-9). Melvin Hodges concurs that in a pioneer work, unless the national evangelist receives help from neighboring churches, it may be necessary for him to find some secular employment until the church is fully established.<sup>36</sup> Admittedly, other people refresh Paul and his apostolic team. The Philippian church is one such community that stands with him and sends financial support (Phi. 1:5; the Macedonian Church of 2 Cor. 8:1-9). The interesting aspect is that these were the churches he planted revealing the fact that a missionary can financially partner with a recipient Church in doing missions.

The fact that Paul never crosses any significant cultural barriers behooves us to have respect for those who do. Cross-cultural work is no mean feat. It is a lot of work and takes a lot of years. One has to learn to be a member of the recipient community culturally before penetrating it with the gospel. Does this then justify the African church slowness in cross-cultural mission involvement? Absolutely, not! It simply underscores the reality that cross-cultural work does not represent the totality of its missions work.

It is clear then that the formation of a missiology appropriate to the African context must transcend the notion that a missionary, who is a modern equivalent of an apostle, must cross cultural barriers and work towards the conversion and discipleship of the people in the host culture. Such missiological constructs previously formulated to influence people to *intentionally cross barriers* in preaching Christ have led to a skewed missionary image. These well-intentioned definitions and descriptions create missions done only by the “expert career missionary” supported by huge budgets from the sending agency. A missiological perspective that has inexorably led to stunting of the African missions movement.

### **Africa’s Diversity: Challenges against Corporate Missions**

Africa moves painfully slow on the issues of joint-efforts of missions within the continent and beyond. One aspect of the criticism identifies lack of cooperation and coordination within the cooperative efforts of AAGA. Although many reasons abound for this malaise, one of these includes the place of diversity in the many people groups of Africa’s people. For one to understand the negative long reach of diversity one has to unravel Africa’s conflicted identity as revealed in its historical background. Africa’s identity is intrinsically wrapped in what historically happened to it as a people. Today, just as in the 1950’s the struggles of indigenization

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Melvin Hodges, *The Indigenous Church*, (Springfield MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1953), 87.

of Africa's organizations and dreams are dogged by serious misunderstanding of the identity of its people. The differences between western mission agencies and the recipient's perceptions create tensions spilling in various sectors of Africa. One biggest challenge is the self-perceptions of Africans derived from their environment which do not use the *Image of God* motif as clearly portrayed in the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup>

Who is an African? It is hard to generalize anything about Africa. The continent is large, its people so diverse with thousands of languages and dialects. Africa covers 20% of the world mass, with a population of 1 billion, speaking over 2000 languages, in 53 countries, all with their own beliefs, different traditions and histories. Whatever summarization we make of its people and land is in part myopic and potential oversimplifications at best. Yet, there are some things so common all over Africa to be used as a summation for the whole continent. Africa's people include the northerners of the Arab-descent found in countries such as Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt; the Nilotic peoples from the northeastern part of Africa in countries such as Ethiopia, Eritria, Rwanda, Djibouti; the Bantu peoples found in the west, central and southern parts of Africa; and other smaller groupings such as the San, Pygmies, etc.<sup>38</sup>

### *Africa: Its History and Beliefs*

Worldviews, which are the basic assumptions about reality, lie behind the beliefs and behaviors of a culture determining humanity's conception of reality.<sup>39</sup> Thus, to a certain degree Africa's worldviews creates and determines its identity and destiny. This is much more than the "Colonization of the mind." Worldviews color the reality of our perception. Admittedly, the way Africa conceives and acts out reality reveals that the continent is shackled by many things, chief being its worldviews.

Another facet of *Africanity* is the impact religion has on it. Africans are a religious people. Christianity has the most followers (59%) followed by Islam, (28%). Animism a belief that purports that nature is pregnant with the spirit has since time immemorial aligned itself with the religious beliefs of an African. Although statisticians claim that it now accounts only for 7% of Africa's population, it is so pervasive that people take it with them as they join other religions. One can just see how the multiplicities of "prophetic" movements with dubious theological concoction have sway on Africa's populations. Additionally, animism is the founding spirituality of all UPGs of Africa. Other religions such as Hinduism, Baha'i, and Judaism, account for the remaining 6 % of Africa's population.

As already intimated, the solution to Africa's "backwardness" and "slowness" is not easy to postulate: for many "solutions" have already been tried to no avail. Could the answer be though in a sum total of various suggested solutions? Whatever the solution, part of that answer is Africa's acceptance of what it is as derived through self-discovery and the mastery of owning its destiny. Africans must realize their nature and essence. They are created in the image of God just like any other peoples. Because all peoples are created in the *image of God*, then they are equal and should be free. Self-discovery begins in learning to accept our identity and image

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<sup>37</sup>A major part of this section is gleaned from Lessons 2 of Enson Lwesya, *Emerging Leadership Issues in Africa: Doctoral Study Guide*. Lome, Togo: Pan-Africa Theological Seminary, 2009.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 15.

<sup>39</sup>Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House 1985), 45.



*Ethnicity, Teams and Collaboratives*

Africa is so rich in people diversity. Unfortunately, Africa's diversity has sometimes been its weakness instead of its strength. Tribalism, regionalism, nepotism rocks all forms of societies. The difficulties of developing a united front of missions from among national churches and across Africa lies in part to the challenges created by Africa's ethnocentrism. Most initiatives at the continent level dismally fail because of the propensity to protect nationhood or sovereignty. The answer to the divisive nature of tribalism is found in a clear articulation of the need to working in teams, or collaboratives. This approach does two things: First, it opens up individuals to the understanding of the intrapersonal differences essential for team building. Second, it discusses approaches that help people develop work teams, collaboratives, and organizations despite the evident and visible differences such as tribalism. AG-Africa continues to move slowly in developing a multi-national collaborative for mission because national churches are extremely introverted, caring less what happens beyond the geopolitical boundaries in the guise of sovereignty. Unfortunately, national leaders fail to see the benefit of collaborating across the continent.<sup>40</sup>

Team work is contingent on the collective use of individual strengths, and giftedness is the essence of teamwork and leadership. Inversely individual brilliance remains meaningful when anchored in collective efforts of humanity. Biblical passages dealing with the giftedness of every believer are normally set within the analogous context of the human body with different functional parts. Each member of the body is essential, significant and serves a particular function. These texts (1 Cor. 12: 12-27; Rom. 12: 3-6; Eph. 4: 7-16) reveal that function of each part is for the common good of the whole body. The success of team leadership lies in this fact: leadership is for benefit of community.<sup>41</sup> The same philosophy must be applied on the continental level where national churches bring specific strengths for continent-wide missions.

Team work (collaborative) and leadership are not only essential to a community (organizations) but it is also the essence of exponential growth for all forms of institutions (effect, impact or results). Organizations that perfect working and leading by teams—emphasising and appreciating the role and giftedness of each member—usually receive the best for their intervention (work, ministry & missions). In this case, African church leaders must develop a “beyond-mindset”, by not only thinking for missions that lies within the geo-political boundaries of their nations. They have to start collaboratives, develop links, or networks for missions with leaders from other nations.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 15-16. Teams or collaboratives do not just happen; there is a particular and distinct process of team development. One important observation of team development is that the team's cohesion and effectiveness tend to grow worse before they reach peak performance levels. And indeed, the previous AG-Africa collaboratives for missions have not worked well. Could it be that a lot of aspects needed for team development have not been considered? As teams develop, they experience growing pains. However, many levels are in the team development cycle, effective teams reveal specific characteristics. Patrick Lenciano explains that functioning teams are vibrant and active. Members of such teams (1) trust each other; (2) give attention to agreed upon results; (3) are not afraid of conflict that arise among them; (4) they are passionate and committed to the mission and vision of their organizations; and finally (5) they are accountable for their individual behaviour, results and direction of the organization. Strong and well-performing teams are grounded on the premise that teams work well when the qualifications, responsibilities and expectations of members are well articulated.

Although teams seem to naturally occur in communities, they do not develop automatically. Africa wrestles with team development in its various communities. First, Africa is diverse with thousands different ethnic groups and peoples. This diversity, though a great ingredient for effective teams poses a challenge at the beginning of the creation of teams. Second, the cultural-philosophical understanding of tribes tends to unravel the desire to develop multi-cultural teams at workplaces. Tribalism—the negative inward-looking bigotry practiced by tribes men continues to destroy the essence of building teams. This cancer tends to grow even in contexts that should not sustain them such as the church.<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, sometimes leaders who should know that the church is a community of people from all tribes, languages, peoples still stumble over the issues of ethnicity. However big the challenges of developing a missionary movement are, one giant solution is embedded in the development of leaders with a world vision. The success of collaborative leadership lies in this fact: leadership is for the benefit of community. And in this case, it is for the benefit of the Church, an organization existing for the purpose of “seeking and saving that which is lost” (Luke 19:10).

### **Missional Organizations of AG-Africa**

The missional involvement of AG-Africa is slowly growing stronger. Admittedly, the steps are too slow and at times they seem retrogressive. Over the last twenty years various national churches and regions of AG-Africa have attempted to initiate various missional organizations and projects. Assemblies of God National churches from West Africa such as Nigeria Assemblies of God sent missionaries into Cameron, Niger, etc; Burkina Faso sent missionaries into Ivory Coast and Guinea Bissau. Countries from other regions equally started. Assemblies of God national churches from Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania also sent missionaries.<sup>44</sup> Understandably, all these attempts are on national levels. The following initiatives were started with the aim of inspiring, sensitizing and coordinating the work of missions across the continent.

#### *Eleventh Hour Institute*

In 1997 during the East Africa Leadership II meeting a call for the formation of a mobile missions school was made.<sup>45</sup> It was to be a vehicle to raise awareness of mission and inspire the church’s involvement in spreading the gospel to all nations. The first Eleventh Hour Institute (EHI) session was held in Lilongwe, Malawi with 165 leaders from East Africa in attendance. From there on, the AAGA Executive requested that the EHI should become a continent wide initiative much more than for one region (EAST Africa). With a strong partnership with Africa’s Hope, the EHI phenomenon was transported to many countries. For ten years, the EHI went to

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Originally, the East Africa countries formed the Regional Missions Board as a Mobilization and Sending agency for the countries. And through this outfit, even though it never worked well, the church sent missionaries from Malawi (three families), Kenya (one family) and from Tanzania (two families)

<sup>45</sup>Lazarus Chakwera called for the formation of a Mobile mission institute when he challenged the Leaders of East Africa preaching from the parable of the Eleventh Hour laborers (Mathew 20). The following year, he and John York assembled a curriculum whose lessons were written by many practitioners of missions. In fact, Lazarus Chakwera used the EHI concept was central to the design of his doctoral project.

more than 15 nations of Africa encouraging the national churches to institute organizations for missions.

On major criticism, the slowness of the missional growth in the AG-Africa stems from the outstanding success of the EHI. The passion exhibited in the various sessions of EHI across the continent, the creation of many national missional departments in various national churches created a great hope for a mass movement in the mobilization and sending of missionaries. But somehow, many of those who have watched the progress of the EHI, they think its impact has not been commensurate with the missionaries sent out! Admittedly, the criticism is obvious; yet it is misplaced. A correct evaluation of any intervention, organization or project begins with a clear understanding of its original purpose. The EHI was never meant to mobilize and send missionaries; its aim was to raise awareness and sensitize the Church (es) to become involved in missions. It is impossible to create a continent-wide sending agency with the present configuration of AAGA, which is merely a loose association of national churches. Part of the EHI sessions always included strategy sessions that led the national churches develop missional goals including the creation of missional departments in countries. Therefore, it is the national churches mission departments that should be developing the strategy for mobilizing and sending missionaries to different nations. Trying to evaluate the EHI with a mobilization and sending motif shows a lack of understanding of its purpose and giving it a new and impossible task.

#### *World Mission Commission*

The WMC for AAGA was provisionally instituted in January 2000 during the AAGA Executive and later ratified by the Indianapolis AAGA General Assembly in August of the same year.<sup>46</sup> It was an expressed desire of many leaders both from AG-Africa and AG-America that the impact of the Decade of Harvest needed proper channeling towards the formation of a powerful missional movement from Africa. Hence there was a call for the creation of an organization to coordinate the missionary activity under the care of the AAGA Executives. The WMC was created to fulfill three main purposes. First, it was to work towards prioritizing efforts to reach unreached peoples by the national churches of Africa. This was to include conducting deliberate research into the location and nature of all of Africa's unreached peoples, wherever they may be found; sourcing accurate and useful statistics and information on unreached peoples to the national church mission's agencies across Africa; and also allocating primary mission's responsibility for specific unreached peoples to those national churches interested.

Second, the WMC was to provide coordination of existing and new missionary endeavors across the continent. As a service to the national churches of Africa the WMC was to, a) maintain a data base of current missionary endeavors being actively pursued across the continent as well as those missionary endeavors projected for future implementation; b) provide an official listing of all Assemblies of God missionaries representing Assemblies of God national churches, including their place of assignment, ministry activity, and length of service and c) serve as a forum for discussion, strategic planning, decision-making and conflict resolution concerning the deployment of national church missionary personnel across the continent.

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<sup>46</sup>Don Tucker (AAGA Secretary), John York (ATTS Director) and John Ikoni (Nigeria Secretary) sponsored a letter that called for the formation of the World Missions Commission (December 1, 1999). The sponsors of the Resolution asked for a provisional creation of the Commission and the appointment of its Chairman even before a full discussion by the General Assembly. Therefore, the resolution asked that the WMC be set by January 2000 and later ratified in a General Assembly to be held later in August of that year (Indianapolis).

Third, the WMC was to encourage the establishment and function of regional missions departments, along the geographical divisions of the official AAGA regions (a total of five at this time) with the following intentions: a) The ongoing implementation of the “Eleventh Hour Institute” concept of mission training in each region of the continent, and in individual countries requesting the same, in close collaboration with ATTS<sup>47</sup> as the leading agency in this function. At that time the Resolution called for a timetable for implementation of the EHI program was to established as a first priority of the WMC and b) the development of an AAGA Research effort, focused upon world missions efforts, but not limited to that function.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, the WMC did not adequately fulfill its purpose in the first ten years of its existence. Not one of its three major purposes received adequate attention. There was virtually no movement in any of its emphasis except for a missions meeting held in Burkina Faso in 2005.<sup>49</sup> However, in the 2010 AAGA General Assembly held in South Africa the leaders rekindled a new zeal for the operations and performance of the WMC. The WMC leaders resolved to improve and started to facilitate meetings in three year cycles; while at the same time they resolved to find means for data collection and information storage of missions-related issue. First, the WMC conducts Pentecostal Missional Consultations for missiologists and reflective practitioners. During these consultations involve a presentation of well written papers which are later published. Second, the following year the meetings are held by regional leaders within the configuration of the regions. Third, the WMC organizes a triennial congress which brings all national leaders for a time of envisioning for missions. It is hoped that the rest of the purposes of the WMC will be engaged in the near future.

### *Acts in Africa Initiative*

The Acts in Africa Initiative (AIA), a ministry commissioned by the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance and the Assemblies of God World Missions, USA (Africa Office), exists to help inspire a new Pentecostal awakening in the Africa Assemblies of God resulting in the greatest evangelistic and missionary advance in the history of the continent. As a service agency, AIA aims to point the various working partners towards the importance of spirit-empowered missions. AG-Africa statistics are encouraging: The Assemblies of God in Africa is experiencing exponential growth with about 16 million constituents meeting in more than 50 thousand churches in 50 countries in sub-Sahara Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin. This is up from 2.1 million constituents and 12 thousand churches in 1990. However, another form of statistics shows that only 19% of AG-Africa 16 million strong memberships are baptized in the Holy Spirit. AIA sees itself as a service arm helping national church leaders of AG-Africa to assume as part of their job description of intentionally leading their constituents to understand and

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<sup>47</sup>ATTS is an acronym for Africa Theological Training Service also known as Africa’s Hope. This was started in the early 1990s at the beginning of the Decade of Harvest strategy to facilitate, coordinate and encourage the efficiency of Theological Training in AG-Africa. Dr. John York, a visionary and intense missiologist set it up and saw its great expansion as it became a great and influential organization within the General Council of Assemblies of God.

<sup>48</sup>For the Letter that Sponsored WMC Resolution, the WMC Resolution and the WMC Constitution see the Denny Miller & Enson Lwesya (editors) *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions in Africa* (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2011), 185-192.

<sup>49</sup>The WMC in its 2011 Executive Leadership meeting held Brackenhurst concluded that lack of commitment by the leaders and inadequate financial resources for its operations contributed to the dismal failure of the WMC.

experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The leaders of AIA and AAGA are consumed with the understanding that only a revival will shift these figures upward, without which AG-Africa cannot become a missional organization filled and led by the Holy Spirit<sup>50</sup>.

### Maturing a Missions Organization

Despite the continued great missionary inspirational preaching reverberating in most of AG-Africa national churches, the constituent missions organizations have not proportionally grown in maturity. There is slow growth; and the fact remains that despite phenomenal numerical growth of AG-Africa in the last twenty years, most of its national churches do not have mature missions departments. This picture reveals the reality that missions maturity is never an issue of instantaneous miracles. Pedrozo and Walz who have worked with the Argentina Assemblies of the God missions department and seen it grow, categorically state that a missions department takes time to mature. They further highlight important missional principles. First, everything that is worth something takes time to grow or create. On the way to missional maturity, leaders of such organizations make mistakes, confront and win battles, and gain experiences impossible to get from books or theory. Second, in order to achieve maturity a missions department must have the right leaders in place. Many times, a country is ripe for blessing, but the right leader has not been formed, or is not willing serve, or has not been selected to take on the challenge. As well, a real challenge for most of our sending-South nations is that they do not have a missions leaders with missionary experience.<sup>51</sup>

The biggest challenge AG-Africa national churches face is lack of mature missions departments. Unfortunately, some still do not have the departments at all. Just like any growing organizations, missions departments go through organizational growth cycles, albeit unique to themselves.<sup>52</sup> Pedrozo and Walz recognize five critical stages of growth for missional maturity:

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<sup>50</sup>Acts in Africa Initiative, an AAGA affiliate champions the Decade of Pentecost, a grand strategy influencing national churches to emphasize the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is hoped that 10 million new converts will be reached through intentional spirit-empowered efforts.

<sup>51</sup>Antonio Pedrozo and Walz, "Missional Mentoring: How National Churches with Strong and Effective Missions Outreaches Can Mentor Those Without?" in *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions*, edited by Miller and Enson Lwesya (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2011), 91.

<sup>52</sup>Pedrozo and Walz identify ten (10) characteristics of maturing Missional agencies worth noting. They include 1. *Long-term missionaries*. A mature missions sending department will have sent long-term missionaries outside of its country who speak the languages of the people they are working with. They will have overcome the barriers of time (short-term only missionaries), distance (just going to near-by nations), language (speaking only the language of the sending country) and religion (reaching people within the same or similar religious context). Each barrier requires a greater effort than the previous. 2. *Income*. Their income is constantly growing, and has possibly even surpassed the income of the general headquarters. You know that you have a mature missions vision when this condition no longer bothers church leaders nor causes jealousy among them. 3. *Pastoral care*. The department provides pastoral care to the missionaries in the field. The missionaries are understood and ministered to. This can also be done by local churches. A missions agency should never be seen to take the place of the local church in loving and caring for missionaries on the field. 4. *Executive director*. They have full-time administrative personal with one or more of the executive team dedicated full-time to missions. If the executive director is married to both his church and to the full-time job of leading the missions department, he will be severely limited in his ability to move the work forward. 5. *Good reputation*. The missions department has a good image and a positive reputation when it comes to the administration of financial resources. Because those administering the finances are transparent in their use of money, there are no legitimate questions about their integrity. 6. *Savings*. The department is not living day by day but has savings in the bank which will allow it to respond effectively to emergencies. 7. *Decision-making team*. The

*Pioneer stage* where the growth is very slow; *Battle stage* embedded with challenges that scares the leadership; *Growth Stage* fruit and permanence seen by the Christians in a national church; *Consolidation Stage* here a solid structure is organized in anticipation of future growth, and finally; *Respect Stage* where the agency and its leadership has earned a good testimony and name in the national church.<sup>53</sup>

### Leadership and Missions in AG-Africa

Pedrozo and Walz reveal the critical place of strong leadership apart from stable structures for the development of the missional vision in a national church.<sup>54</sup> The two—strong leaders and stable structures—are symbiotically related. However, the fact still stands that mature and visionary leaders are key to functioning, serious, and strong sending structures. Unfortunately, the Indigenous Philosophy, a hallmark of Assemblies of God theological foundations, creates its own dark shadows. The desire to make local and national churches self-sustaining in every way possible creates an aggressive and independent culture persuading such communities to have blinkers that do not allow them to see anything beyond their boundaries. Unless, leaders develop a world vision, all they see are the natural and convenient geo-political boundaries.

Therefore, it is essential that ministers are intentionally trained and equipped with leadership skills. Based on the curriculums in most ministerial formation training systems of Africa, it is evident that they are geared towards producing pastors (preachers) and not leaders. Thus, the majority of the ministers genuinely care for the flock but they don't really lead. By and large, the majority of AG-Africa local church ministers need radical re-training as leaders to lead the church in the expansion of the Kingdom of God beyond geo-political boundaries and across various forms of cultural barriers. Not only must the pastor be seen as a missional leader, he (she) must also be equipped to raise up local missions lay leaders. As leader of the church, the pastor is the inspirer and must be willing to instill the missionary vision into the church.<sup>55</sup>

Second, national church leaders from AG-Africa churches must learn to lead their constituents to look beyond their sovereign geo-political boundaries. The Church as a missionary people of God views the nations without the gospel as its reason for existence. However, just like in the case of local church ministers, the indigenous philosophy “erroneously” persuades the national leaders to focus on the development of the national church functions while underplaying the need to look beyond geo-political boundaries. If the Church’s purpose is to seek and serve

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responsibility of making decisions does not fall on one person only, but there is a team that constantly decides, executes, and evaluates decisions. 8. *English competency*. To ensure that international communication is not limited there is one or more persons in the team who speak English. 9. *Missionary training*. There are training programs to prepare and orient future missionary candidates to the work. 10. *Promotion*. There are programs to motivate and mobilize the churches in all areas, including children, youth, intercessory prayer, promotion, and information sharing to the local churches. Page 91-92

<sup>53</sup>Pedrozo and Walz, 92.

<sup>54</sup>Antonio Pedrozo and Walz, “Missional Mentoring: How National Churches with Strong and Effective Missions Outreaches Can Mentor Those Without?” in *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions*, edited by Denzil Miller and Enson Lwesya (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2011), 115.

<sup>55</sup>Pedrozo and Walz, 106.

that which is lost, then national church leaders must deliberately go beyond a conserving mentality and embrace a sending theology and initiate structures for the same. Not only will a sending vision require leadership on a local level, including both pastors and lay leaders, it will also require committed leadership on a national level.<sup>56</sup>

Pedrozo and Walz conclude, and rightly so, that developing a “sending vision” rests on the development of the leadership capacity within a community. They observe that many times a country is ripe for harvest but the right leader has not been formed, or is not willing, or has not been selected to take up the challenge.<sup>57</sup> The formation and operationalization of the missions department is equally a leadership issue. Leaders facilitate the creating, casting, and communication of missions’ vision. Leaders not only initiate the process; they maintain the momentum. The inspirational tone of the various Eleventh Hour Institutes conducted across Africa to sensitize and raise missional awareness is dampened by leaders who fail to maintain the process. One aspect of maintaining momentum is efficiency in managing the processes and systems of a “sending vision.” This is done by assuring the community of givers of financial accountability and ensuring the sent missionaries of continued support. Leaders of effective missionary sending systems are essential to Africa’s move into full participation in the *missio Dei*.<sup>58</sup>

Third, on the larger scale of nations and continent, AG-Africa desperately needs to demonstrate leadership in envisioning missions and developing a theology of collaboration. Unlike the New Pentecostals who assume an absence of *their* national churches in recipient nations and aggressively send missionaries to open such, there is a form of an Assemblies of God Church in most African nations. Therefore, when AG-Africa missionaries go to other countries they invariably go to places where there is a national church; this necessitates collaboration from both the sending and receiving communities. Missionaries from Assemblies of God do not go to other countries to plant churches that are controlled from the mother church headquarters; they plant indigenous movements, with the capacity to have nationals lead by themselves. Although this is counter-intuitive to a missionary pioneering ethic, it is intensely New Testament philosophy and practice. It has great benefits for it anchors the work in the hearts and hands of the nationals who above all else are contextually suited to lead the church.

The WMC is strategically set to drive continent-wide collaboration for missions. There are two obstacles, however, against the development of this collaboration. First, most national churches lack vision for missions that is cross-cultural and across geo-political boundaries. WMC cannot coordinate work that does not exist. Its existence is meaningful when many national churches want to go to the other nations to speak the word of Christ. Second, the WMC must be capacitated with resources to do its job effectively. The logical way to mobilize resources is from its constituents. However, the members who are intensely independent due to the DNA of the AAGA philosophy as a non-binding legal association do not see it as a necessity.

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>58</sup>Enson Lwesya, “Missional Mentoring: a Response” in *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions in Africa*, edited by Denzil Miller and Enson Lwesya (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2011), 114.

## Confluence

Although it is difficult to evaluate a movement with diverse characteristics as the missions enterprise of AG-Africa, it is still essential that a form of yardstick is followed to help those working within it to find ways of gauging their performances. As a confluence of the tributaries of ideas from the foregone discussions, one thing is clear: AG-Africa is called to follow the New Testament missions philosophy and methods in attempting to become a church that pursues Jesus’ goal of “seeking and saving that which is lost” (Luke 19:10). Yet, it is equally abundantly clear that what we call New Testament missions methods are most of times sanitized by contextual practices of other global church communities. AG-Africa, lives under the shadow of AG-America and unwittingly is bewitched by its missionary methods. Like father, like son; AG-Africa apes the father (AG-America) in how it does missions. However, the greatest difficult is that AG-Africa has inherent contextual challenges of diversity, for the national churches are not one continent-wide Church. Due to a zillion differences of nations, tribes and peoples, AG-Africa is not one monolithic community, and therefore, its constituents do not see things and act the same way.

Compounding the situation is attempting to follow very challenging AG-America’s missionary philosophy and practices. Over the last hundred years, the American church has generated specific biblical conclusions as regards to cross-cultural missions and unreached people groups (UPGs). The reality however is that each church community must self-theologize and contextualize the biblical antecedents while at the same time being cognizant of the historical precedents from other global church communities. It should be understood antecedents do not always fashion the same philosophies and practices for all contexts. This is what makes practicing theology challenging. It tends to spawn different contextual practices. To highlight this challenge, David Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission*, points out that from the very beginning there have been differing theologies of mission and that “there are no immutable and objectively correct ‘laws of mission’ to which exegesis of Scripture give us access and which provide us with blueprints we can apply in every situation”<sup>59</sup> It is abundantly clear then, that a lot of missions philosophies on crossing-culture are contextual applications despite being framed as biblical dictates by its proponents. Therefore, I suggest that Africa “be allowed” to practice missionary methods that are “doable” yet biblically acceptable. How do we do this? One way is to adopt more flexible missionary categories that are relevant to the context. The AG-Latin America categories are a wonderful stage to begin from.<sup>60</sup> Table 1 below is self explanatory:

MISSIONARY CATEGORIES						
#	CATEGORY TYPE	ECONOMIC RELATIONS HIP	TIME ON THE FIELD	TIME OF DEPUTATION WHEN HOME	REQUIREMENTS OF SCHOOL OF MISSIONS	OBSERVATIONS

<sup>59</sup>David Bosch, page 8.

<sup>60</sup>Pedrozo and Walz, 182.



1	<b>Fully Appointed</b>	Fully supported from sending country	3 years, 4 years possible upon request	6-12Months	Required during deputation	
2	<b>Missionary in Training</b>	Fully supported from sending country	3 years	6-12 Months	Required during deputation	First term: under supervision of a mentor. After: promoted to fully appointed
3	<b>SHORT TERM</b>	Fully supported from sending country	1 year, renewable for a 2nd year	6 months	Required before leaving	Must be under the supervision of a missionary
4	<b>Missionary Pastor</b>	Support can be shared by the local church they pastor	5 years and then renewable	Flexible according to need and situation	Required once every five years	Must be submissive to Sending Church Missions Leaders and not just to receiving country
5	<b>Ministerial Support</b>	Support can be shared by the local church they pastor	5 years and then renewable	Flexible according to need and situation	Required once every five years	Must be in full time ministry without secular employment
6	<b>BIVOCATIONAL</b>	Receives most of their support from work	5 years and then renewable	Flexible according to need and situation	Required once every five years	Though they do not depend on sending country, they can receive offerings
7	<b>ETHNIC GROUPS IN COUNTRY</b>	Can receive support from churches	Ongoing as need requires	Flexible according to need and situation	Required once every five years	Is within the country but to another culture/ethnic group

**Table 1: Missionary Categories**

Apart from the challenges of organizing a mission sending structure within the national church, the challenging issue is resource mobilization and finances being the core aspect. Not every national church within the AG-Africa boasts of financial stability, let alone financial independence within their missions departments. Because of this perennial financial challenges and lack of proper organization in Missions departments, categories 3-6 are the likely and flexible ways of sending missionaries from AG-Africa. But the challenge is that there is still stigma against these categories from both within AG-Africa and some “missionaries from AG-America.

Each of the missionary categories identified above as most likely for AG-Africa faces unique challenges. Category 3 (Short Term) is challenged by people lack of infrastructure to raise the necessary funds. And because of the scarcity of employment, people are afraid to resign from a job for a year. It is likely that on their return from the one-year missionary work they may not find a job. Categories 4-5 are the most flexible of the four likely categories for AG-Africa. In these two categories, the missionary is permitted to receive financial support from the church they plant within a mission field. It is easier for an experienced and effective minister to consider planting a church in a metropolis of another African Country. Category 6 is the both innovative yet and biblical. Paul used it extensively. But it still carries a lot of stigma. For instance,

significant leaders from the Malawi Church (some even in the Missions department) have not come to a place of accepting their own successful tent-making missionaries. Why? Because to most AG-Africa leaders only category 1-2 are missionaries. The rest of the categories are aberration of the truth.

### CONCLUSION

Along with the church worldwide, the Africa AG shares the awesome responsibility of taking the message of Christ every nation, tongue, tribe, and people on the face of the earth. The AG missionary movement in Africa must, therefore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, employ every strategic means possible to accomplish that end. In doing so, it must prayerfully and humbly reflect on the biblical model as to how it will approach the task. And it must align itself with what the Spirit is doing in the world today. Like Jesus, the church must learn to do only what it sees the Father doing (cf. John 5: 19). This will call for courage in order to resist outside pressures and to boldly follow the Lord for the harvest. May the Africa AG fully do its part in fulfilling Christ's command to take the gospel to all nations before He comes again—when “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11: 15).

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## ESCALATION OF HARASSMENT AND INCREASED FAITH

Jeff Nelson<sup>1</sup> and Ismael Yusuf<sup>2</sup> (pseudo name)

### Introduction

A man born blind is healed by a miracle of Jesus (John 9). The Pharisees begin a campaign of harassment in an effort to dissuade people from following Jesus. The healed man increases in his faith in proportion to the escalation of harassment.

Ismael Yusuf (pseudo name), a Muslim man in an East African tribe is miraculously healed in the name of Jesus. His community leaders harass him. But the healed man increases in his faith in proportion to the escalation of harassment.

Both men grow in their faith as a direct result of their persecution. Persecution drives some away from their faith, while others draw closer to God through adversity. The love and power of Jesus is strong. The adversity seeking to drive them away from Christ has the opposite result. “Persecution tends to refine and strengthen faith, and even create an environment of greater growth.”<sup>3</sup> The more the provocation, the closer the men are drawn toward the God who healed them.

### A Man They Call Jesus

The man born blind does not have an immediate mature faith when he is healed. His faith grew through the attacks. When he was first asked about his healing, his confession was simply “The man they call Jesus” was the one who healed me (9:11). Jesus was simply a “man” to him at first.

### Yusuf’s Background and Testimony of Healing

I was born in an Islamic region of Northern Kenya bordering the republic of Somalia. Like all the other families in the community my family is Muslim. Biologically every child is by birth a Muslim in that part of the world and I was no exception.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Nelson, with his wife Janelle and their four children, has served with Assemblies of God World Missions in Nairobi, Kenya, since 2001. He currently serves as the vice chancellor (CEO) of EAST University, an institution that is training hundreds of ministers and missionaries, as well as secretary of the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) national Missions Commission. He has been active in leading two-thirds world missionaries and has launched over twenty churches among least-reached people groups and hard areas. Recently, the Joshua Project removed the Rendille tribe from their list of least-reached people groups, partly due to the efforts of EAST Missions. Jeff is currently writing his PhD dissertation titled *Preliminary Recommendations For Planting Churches Among Somalis In Kenya For The Kenya Assemblies Of God*.

<sup>2</sup> Ismael Yusuf (pseudo name) is a Muslim Background Believer from East Africa who was a mosque leader and provincial governor for an Islamic government before a miraculous healing which led him to Christ. He is currently studying at a seminary and preparing to serve Christ and plant churches among Muslim people.

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Trousedale, *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville: Nelson, 2012), 145.

In my early formative years I had to attend *Duksis* (Islamic instruction schools) alongside the formal primary school. This was normative and imperative for every child. *Duksis* thrived in every village even where the government schools were not available. Every student brought firewood as the classes were conducted at night in the village open grounds. We sat around the fireplace as we were catechized through writing, reading and reciting. We wrote on wooden boards with charcoal pastes as ink made from charcoal dusts mixed with camel milk.

As a result of this early training and environment, Islamic culture and ethics permeated my cosmology. I observed the five pillars or duties of Islam. I labored to obtain righteousness through the performance of these duties and strived to walk the *Sirat Al-Mustaqim* (the straight path) in order to attain *fallah* (success) both in this world and hereafter. As early as in high school years the desire to advance the cause of *Umma* (community of Islam) through the propagation of Islam in order to bring about the actualization of the will of Allah on His earth burnt deeply within me.

To actualize my dream, I went for studies in Islamic *Sharia* (law) in Khartoum, Sudan after high school. The studies there further shaped my resolve. I came to believe *Umma*, as the true community of God on earth, are to rule the world on His behalf and anyone else in power anywhere on earth is an imposter. The *Umma* must reign over every public space. The *Dar-ul-harb* (region of war) areas not under Islamic *Sharia* must be subdued to turn it into the *Dar-ul-salaam* (region of peace) areas under Islamic *Sharia*.

Increasing victories for secularism at the expense of Islamic solidarity, which has imposed a rival claim for the allegiance of Muslims around the world, disturbed me. Theocracy was supplanted by political entities in certain Islamic nations, a gloomy state precipitated by triumph of the principle of nationality and concomitant growth of nationalism. These forces collide with the predominant theocratic conception of power that informs Islamic domestic and public arrangements.

Back home after studies across neighboring Somalia I found a fertile ground to advance my ideology. It was through the Islamic Court Unions, a theocracy that filled the governance vacuum left by the ouster of the autocrat Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. I joined its cadres and after a short while I was appointed governor of a region in Somalia (from 2005-2008).

Our goal was to create a certain environment for the *Umma* where Islamic *Sharia* and culture ruled and to reject with violence any political arrangement that marginalizes the *Umma*, an intentional expansion of Islam, an attempt to demarcate sacred spaces and boundaries against surrounding infidels. We rejected separation of religion and politics because Islam covers all aspects of life. It is a self-contained worldview.

The court unions brought some sort of sanity in an otherwise chaotic Somalia.<sup>4</sup> However in 2006 invading Ethiopian forces ousted it.<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Shariff Hassan, the Court's president fled. Abdullahi Yusuf, the infamous president made in Nairobi by IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) member states was installed.

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<sup>4</sup>“Profile: Somalia’s Islamic Courts” BBC News (June 6, 2006) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/5051588.stm> (accessed February 13, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Bill Roggio, “The Rise & Fall of Somalia’s Islamic Courts: An Online History,” *The Long War Journal* (January 4, 2007), [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the\\_rise\\_fall\\_of\\_som.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the_rise_fall_of_som.php) (accessed 13 February 2013).

### Treasure in the Trash

It was during this time I fell ill to cancer. I was in great pain and bed ridden for about eight months. Occasionally, my family would carry me to our shop, and would lie on a mat there just so I would not be solitary. One day, as I lay there, I noticed a bundle of old magazines and newspapers near me. Sometimes they were used for wrapping wares bought from the shop. I reached out and pulled one from the bundle for the lack of anything better to do. It was a Christian publication and inside I found the gospel message that ended with a statement about the healing power of Jesus Christ.

It peaked my curiosity enough that I hid it under my arm and waited until I was back in my room to read it. I took my pain medication, lay down and began to read it again. I had never thought of Jesus as a savior, only as a messenger as taught in the Muslim faith. In fact, the concept of salvation was foreign to me. The problem of man to me was not sin (disobedience) but ignorance of the will of God. Therefore, there was no need for a savior and salvation. Rather, man needed divine guidance to aid him to know the will of God in order to attain success. Now I realize this position fails to consider the rebellious nature of humanity seriously. People reject even what may appear to be obvious truth.

My pain was so acute and the situation so desperate that I decided to make the best gamble of my life by saying the prayer outlined in the magazine. I added to it a vow of following Jesus forever if he healed me from that infirmity. "Today Jesus I commitment myself to you. I am sick and suffering. If you heal me I will follow you forever." I fell asleep and woke up past midnight and was comfortable. No pain! I had a tumor that I could feel. I reached to feel it, and couldn't feel anything! I stood and walked. No pain! I had not been able to walk without support for sometimes. "Eureka!" I cried out, "Now I know Jesus heals!"<sup>6</sup> I woke up my wife to break the good news. Unfortunately she rebuked me for attributing the healing to Jesus. She tried to correct my euphoria by giving glory to Allah, but I remained adamant since I knew by whose name the healing occurred.

### Confronted by the Religious Leaders

The blind man's neighbors brought the healed man to the Pharisees. What were they thinking? Why would they bring this man before the religious leaders? Surely they knew the leaders would find fault with this man because of his association with Jesus. The Pharisees manufactured a superficial reason to find fault with Jesus. "The day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath" (9:14). In the next chapter we find the real reason they hated Jesus. "We are not stoning you for any of these (great miracles)...but...because you...claim to be God" (10:33). Jesus answered them, "Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'" (10:36)?

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<sup>6</sup> Miraculous healing is among the list often given by Muslims who come to Jesus. J. Dudley Woodberry, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks, "Why Muslims Follow Jesus," *Christianity Today* (October 2007), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/october/42.80.html?start=1> (Accessed January, 15 2010). The study was conducted "between 1991 and 2007, about 750 Muslims who have decided to follow Christ filled out an extensive questionnaire on that basic question. The respondents—from 30 countries and 50 ethnic groups—represent every major region of the Muslim world."

### Yusuf's Encounter with Leaders in the Mosque

Later the following day I went for *Jumaa* (Friday) prayers at the mosque without human aid. The faithful were people known to me and they all knew my ailing condition. When the prayer was over, I approached the front and took the microphone from the Imam. It was not difficult for me to do this since it was common for me to give talks there. I aided in the building of that mosque. Furthermore, I was an elder there.

I stood before them as the congregation gazed at me. Plainly I narrated my healing story. The joyous chorus turned into fury when I announced that the healing took place by the name of Jesus. The mob descended on me, beating and kicking me. They were dragging me out.

Some elders intervened to seek the opinion of the Imam and Sheikhs. Argument broke out; the more youthful were calling for my immediate execution. I had defiled the faith, and the mosque, which under *Sharia* required me to be put to death. In the ensuing commotion and confusion, I was able to slip through the back door of the mosque.

### A Prophet

The Pharisees could not agree about Jesus. Some began from their interpretation of the Law. Others began from their understanding of God. The group that began from the Law said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath" (9:16). While others reasoned, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs" (9:16)? The leaders considered this former blind man "steeped in sin at birth" (9:34) and well below their intellectual and theological capacity. Yet in their disagreement they turned to him and asked, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened" (9:17).

The healed man was listening intently to their dialog. In his mind he had to process this debate. Was this man they call Jesus a sinner? Jesus had given the man a miraculous gift on the Sabbath that no one else had given him on any day of his life. The Pharisees had never provided his healing. If the man called Jesus was willing and able to heal him, he must be a special, loving, and powerful man. The healed man increased in his faith and understanding of Jesus. He no longer replied "The man they call Jesus" healed me. Instead he boldly proclaimed, "He is a prophet" (9:17).

### Family Fear

"The Jews still did not believe that he had been born blind" (9:18) so they sent for his parents. What a brilliant ploy? Jesus could find a man who looked like the man born blind. He could deceive others by parading him as the former blind man and gain followers. Those who would seek to deceive others believe the worst of even the most pure of heart. The chief priests would later seek to deceive by paying the guards a large sum of money to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep" (Matt. 28:13).

Three questions were asked of his parents. "Is this your son?" "Is this the one you say was born blind?" And, "How is it that now he can see" (John 9:19)? The parents answered the first two questions in the affirmative. But they were "afraid" (9:22) to identify with Jesus as the healer. The Pharisees "had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) would be put out of the synagogue" (9:22). They distanced themselves from him and said, "He is of age; ask him" (9:23).



### **Yusuf's Family**

Jesus had miraculously healed me. To date He has helped me to keep the promise to follow Him. But it has not come without a cost. Back in my village the riotous youth divided my livestock. They burned my house. My father disowned me. The night after my stock was divided he could not stand to intervene when I approached him under the cover of night from my hide out. He could have mobilized clan elders to recover my livestock, as is the norm. He dismissed my plight but added he would neither kill me nor protect me. I was dispossessed of my children and wife. Unless Christ intervenes I will not be allowed to ever live in my hometown again.

I am not able to stay with my daughters and see them grow. I have a *fatwa* (death sentence) issued against me. Any Muslim anywhere in the world who would carry that out believes he will receive his reward in paradise.

### **Jesus is From God**

The Pharisees, having confirmed that the man was really healed and having succeeded in isolating the man from his family, called the healed man again. They may have been frustrated in not finding deception in Jesus' ministry. They may have been frustrated in not being able to demonstrate their power to throw the parents out of the synagogue. They summoned the man and said, "Give glory to God" (9:24). This was an oath formula<sup>7</sup> such as swearing on the Bible to tell the truth. "We know that this man is a sinner" (9:24). It is often that the evil voice wins in an evil crowd and the righteous voice wins the argument in a godly crowd. The Pharisees who earlier argued, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs" (9:16) were now silenced.

The healed man used a powerful tool: his testimony. "One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see" (9:25). He overcame by the word of his testimony and his love did not shrink, but grew in the face of opposition (Rev. 12:11). The blind man's confession grew: the man they call Jesus, the man I acknowledge as a prophet, he is my healer.

### **His Disciple**

The Pharisees, perhaps getting frustrated with their case, or perhaps trying to get the man to stumble in his retelling, said, "How did he open your eyes" (9:26)?

The healed man, now gaining a Spirit-empowered boldness standing before the authorities (Matt. 10:17-20), replied, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too" (John 9:27)? The healed man did not show the fear of his parents toward the Pharisees. He was growing in his faith in the Christ during this encounter. There was something about the love of Jesus, God's son, which was drawing the man toward his healer. Even under threat of exclusion from the synagogue; even under interrogation by the religious authorities; even under intimidation by powerful community leaders, he stood boldly and defied their question.

In this question, we see a further growth in his faith as well. The healed man had progressed from only knowing his name, to calling him a prophet, to proclaiming his as healer, to now identifying himself as a disciple of Jesus.

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<sup>7</sup> See Josh. 7:19, Ex. 14:17, 1 Sam. 6:5, Ps. 96:8, Isa. 42:12, and Jer. 13:16.

The Pharisees responded with a higher level of harassment. They had progressed from simple questions (9:15), to displaying their superiority (9:16), to threatening exclusion from the synagogue (9:22), to now “hurling insults at him” (9:28).

The healed man again displays Spirit-empowered speech far above his education<sup>8</sup> when he presented his logical argument. Like a prosecuting attorney he states: “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing” (9:30-33).

The Pharisees had no logical reply, so they resorted to further verbal abuse. “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us” (9:34)! Then they took drastic action and “threw him out” (9:34) of the synagogue. He had been excommunicated from the body. He was removed from the community. He was cut off from social relationships. Had he counted the cost? His devotion to Jesus, a man he had only met for a brief encounter, resulted in being cut off from his family, his community, his social relationships, and his religion. But what did he gain: A relationship with a loving God, through his Son Jesus Christ and fellowship with his growing band of followers? Evidently he determined that the price was worth the purchase. What he gained was worth far more than what he gave up (Luke 9:23-26).

### **Yusuf, a Disciple**

After the healing I did not immediately stop praying in the mosque. The healing was sudden. I had not prepared for it.

Overcome with joy I risked declaring the healing in the mosque. Before that confession of healing by Jesus I had performed the *salah* (prayer) in the Islamic way. I knew Jesus had healed me but didn’t stop going to the mosque. It was partly because there is no Christian church in my area. Even if there was, I am not sure whether I would have gone there on that day.

The violence meted out against me ushered me into the Christian world. After I was formerly led to Christ elsewhere by a man I met before I was healed. I sought him out to ask about Christ. I enrolled in a discipleship class. During which period I struggled with the concept of the son ship of Jesus. Beyond any shadow of doubt I knew Christ had healed me. But what is his identity? Did he heal me in the capacity of God’s son? This thought was anathema: portraying God in anthropomorphic terms.

### **Jesus Seeks Him Out**

The pericope could have ended there, but the inspiring Spirit chose to reveal another encounter. The same Jesus, who healed the man, is concerned about his spiritual life and returns to minister to him further. “Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’” (9:35)? Jesus heard. And he showed interest in this man. He shows interest in every person on earth. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all would spend eternity in loving relationship with him (John 3:16). Jesus found him. Jesus

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<sup>8</sup> See Acts 4:13 for a similar case of astonishment at unschooled and ordinary men.

is seeking (Luke 19:10) for the lost and the disciples who are honestly seeking to know him more. Jesus appears to those who are ready to accept him.

The healed man responds to Jesus’ question, “Who is he, sir?” “Tell me so that I may believe in him” (John 9:36). The same man who boldly defied the Pharisees abusive questions now gently responds to Jesus’ probing inquiries. He demonstrates genuine hunger for more faith.

Jesus who had opened his eyes a short time before now says, “You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you” (9:37). Jesus now opens his eyes to see in faith the Son of God.

The healed man exclaims, “‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him” (9:38). Faith is so simple for the man seeking after God. He had experienced Jesus’ healing, love, and teaching. His response was belief and worship. The progression of the healed man’s faith was mature. This is similar for the East African Muslim Background Believers. “Often conversion for Muslims seems to be a process.”<sup>9</sup> He had traveled from a point of no faith, to calling Jesus a man who had healed him (9:11), to declaring him a prophet (9:17), to calling himself a disciple (9:27), to declaring that he was from God (9:33), to stating publically that he believed in Jesus (9:38), and to worshiping him as Lord (9:38). Like many today faith does not mature in a moment or in a day. It is a growing process. Sometimes it comes through adversity. Sometimes that adversity is the very thing that provides the mental and spiritual process through which faith is formed.

<b>Increased Harassment</b>	<b>Increased Faith</b>
Simple Questions (John 9:15)	Jesus is a man (John 9:11)
Displaying superiority (9:16)	Jesus is a prophet (9:17)
Threatening exclusion (9:22)	I am His disciple (9:27)
Hurling insults (9:28)	Jesus is from God (9:33)
Further verbal abuse (9:34)	I believe (9:38)
They threw him out (9:34)	Worshiped Jesus (9:38)

### **Yusuf, A Worshipper**

Then I believed most biblical books are composite writings probably composed or edited over an extended period of time and by a variety of scribes before reaching their canonical forms. My worry was – is the Son of God – a later addition to the biblical texts?

Islam believes the gospels as they are today are corrupted while it (Islam) does not show us the original. Islam sees itself as the fulfillment and replacement of Christianity.

I could not be sure. Fear gripped me. If I kept entertaining the doubt of the sonship I may lose the healing. So I concluded – whoever he may be –he in fact heals.

I promised to serve him. But my encounter with him lacked doctrinal content. I thought it deceptive to think I had an experience with Christ only to find later that my faith lacked objective reality. Likewise, it is empty to have a faith simply of content without being able to experience God himself.

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<sup>9</sup>David W Shenk, “Forms of Change,” in *Encountering the World of Islam*, ed. Keith Swartley (Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2005), 241.

## A Believer and Worshipper

The Pharisees happened to hear the healed man proclaim, “Lord, I believe” (9:38-40). They had observed the healing hand of Jesus. They had seen not only the physical change, but also the spiritual development that happened in his life through his encounters with Jesus. They heard his testimony that could not be refuted. Yet in the end they were blinder than the blind man was at the beginning of the story.

### Epilogue: The Son of God

Epilogue: Jesus and the Pharisees meet again in the next chapter of John in this ongoing dialog (10:19-21). They clash not over the superficial excuse of healing on the Sabbath, but on the true reason for their hostility: Jesus claim to be the Son of God<sup>10</sup> (10:22-39). The healed man came to acknowledge Jesus as God’s Son and he worshiped him. The theological hurdle of the Trinity and God having a son is a stumbling block for many in Jesus’ day and today. But for those who meet Christ personally theological acceptance follows. Adeney shares a similar story of a lady from a Muslim background. “Latifa began to cry—a deep, cleansing cry. ‘Joy replaced everything I felt was wrong,’ she says. ‘At that time I knew all my questions about the Trinity had no meaning because I had met Jesus personally.’”<sup>11</sup> The healed man in East Africa came to acknowledge Jesus as God’s Son and he worships him.

### Yusuf Acknowledges Jesus is the Son of God

My desire grew to serve God. I knew I would need to study the word of God. One of the people mentoring me suggested a seminary. This led me to seminary where I began attentive, loving, and intelligent inquiry. My move is from experience to scriptures to theology. I only knew Jesus emotionally, rather affectively. But I couldn’t stop there. I want to know him intelligently and objectively.

I spent a lot of time in the library doing my inquiries. Slowly I developed some rudimentary Christology. Christian witness is of events – the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus. Different gospel traditions are fitted together in order to contextualize the church’s

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<sup>10</sup> Recently some scholars are advocating that the familial terms (Son and Father) be translated with words not offensive to Muslims. Jesus however knew that his claim to be the Son of God was offensive to the religious leaders of his day. Yet he felt it was important so he brought it to the forefront in his dialog with the religious leaders. The Son and Father terms in Hebrew, Greek, and even English allow for both biological and non-biological relationships such as “he is like a son to me.” However the difficulty comes in languages such as Arabic and some Turkic languages in which the words Father and Son require biological interpretation. In such a case it would not be appropriate to translate Jesus as God’s biological son. This conjures up the repulsive idea to both Muslims and Christians of God having sex with a woman. In such language cases, a non-biological term, yet carrying the concept of “like a son” would be appropriate. For more see: Joseph Cumming, “Is Jesus Christ the Son of God?” (Springfield, MO: *Enrichment*, Summer 2012 Volume 17 Number 3), 56-62. Also see: Rick Brown, Leith Gray, and Andrea Gray, “The Terms of Translation: A New Look at Translating Familial Biblical Terms” *IJFM* 28:3, Fall 2011, 105 – 120. I personally conclude that we should not shy away from using the term “Son of God” because Jesus did not (John 10:31-39), but in languages, which force the meaning of “son” to be biological, we must not translate the term biologically, but find another appropriate translation.

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Adeney, *Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women* Kindle Location 624.

reflection on this Jesus event. The enthroned Jesus to whom the gospels bear witness does not cease his work but continues it with his disciples.

I came to be amazed at the structural unity in biblical Christology. These are books written in different epochs. He is predicted in the Old Testament, fulfillment comes in the gospels, proclamation in the Acts, explanation in the Epistles, culmination in Revelation. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

This is a journey that began in experience. When there is present an authentic community of the Messiah ministering to the real need of a Muslim, demonstrating Christ’s love and Christ meeting that Muslim at the point of a particular real need either directly or through his representatives, that Muslim will turn to Christ, having thus encountered his compassion. In the New Testament almost all people whose needs were met by the savior followed him.

Sometimes we think that the needs of people are not their real needs. Muslims having been inoculated from Christ from birth don’t think they have spiritual needs that Christ can meet. Intervention initially should avoid clashing with their belief system. Neither should we mutilate biblical truths by revising or otherwise in order to make the gospel attractive to them. We should not over contextualize or amend biblical Christology. It is tantamount to reducing the word of God to the work of man.

We rather maintain ministry of ‘presence’ among the Muslim becoming to them what Jesus became to persons he encountered. We are his instruments, if he healed we heal, if he fed we feed, and if he forgave we forgive. Muslims encountered in these ways by Christ will shelve their doubts and follow him. We should not engage in fruitless Christological arguments in witness to Muslims. The converts whose needs Jesus satisfied will go back to scriptures and theology to inquire and the spirit of truth will illuminate their minds and reveal the true identity of the son of God.

The great Christological controversies in the early church should remind us how the issue of identity confused and divided the church. This should be our prayer, “stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:30).

Now I am not ashamed to call Jesus the Son of God. I know what it means. He is the one who rescued and holds my life in safety and took me out of a life – denying situation and placed me in a life affirming one. The rescuer plucked me from a dehumanizing ambience and placed me in a position where I can grow toward authentic humanity. I came in my sickness and weakness. He gave healing and strength. I surrendered my rebellion. He helps me do his will. He is my companion and provision. He can become all of these things and more to any Muslim.

### **Conclusion**

The stories of these two healed men demonstrate persecution is a powerful force. “Many in our own group...have suffered much persecution after conversion. Yet, the precious prize of knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, and God as Father, was a gift worth suffering for.”<sup>12</sup> Harassment can push people towards God if they do not succumb to fear, social pressure, false theology, and faulty logic. “For us, persecution is like the sun coming up in the east. It happens all the time. It’s the way things are...Persecution for our faith has always been...a normal part of

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

life.”<sup>13</sup> When the Spirit is working in the life of a seeker through healing, loving relationships, or nurturing mentorship, harassment can serve to strengthen the faith of a growing disciple until they come to maturity in Jesus the Messiah. The right time for a mentor to advise a disciple to reveal their new faith is a matter of prayer and prophetic importance as in the life of Mordecai and Esther.<sup>14</sup>

Adeney identifies this point in telling the story of Latifa. “Looking back now, she is thankful for that period of persecution because it helped her mature spiritually. It brought out the fruit of the Spirit in her life.”<sup>15</sup> The tactics of the enemy used by the Pharisees of Jesus’ day and religious leaders today include intimidation, interrogation, insult, exclusion, deception, and even stoning, or other means of physical harm may keep some from following Christ. But there are those, like the stories above, who are driven closer to Christ with each progressive measure of harassment. It may not be good or necessary to push seekers to quickly to form theological opinions about God. But as these two men demonstrate, with time, growing relationship with God, and proper mentorship, believers will grow to form biblical theological opinions about God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

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<sup>13</sup>Nik Ripken and Gregg Lewis, *The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013), 161.

<sup>14</sup> Jeff Nelson, “Going Public with Faith in a Muslim Context: Lessons from Esther” *IJFM* 28:4 2011, 191–194.

<sup>15</sup>Adeney, Kindle Location 631.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Apostolic Function In 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mission* by Alan R. Johnson. William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA, 2009; 258pp. Reviewed by Peter Chiwaula.

In his book *Apostolic Function*, Allan Johnson, an Assemblies of God missionary for over 20, years seeks to address a growing lack of clarity in his constituency as to what missions is and how it should be conducted. The term “apostolic function” that he uses does not explicitly call for the affirmation of the office of apostleship, but it looks at the function of an Apostle, particularly from a Pauline perspective of seeking to go where the gospel has not gone before.

Johnson reviews a variety of approaches to mission that by their nature have tended to emphasize distinct frameworks in the conduct of mission such as social concern, planting and growing of churches and unreached people groups. While Evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic approaches (EPC) all appeal to the authority of the scripture, 21<sup>st</sup> Century missions may best be conducted by integrating insights from all of these streams and their associated frames.

Johnson’s main idea focuses on missionary identity and “apostolic function. He therefore seeks to give clear insight of who an apostle is according to the New Testament. First a distinction in function and office of an apostle is made in order that misconceptions of the idea of the early apostles should not be mixed with today’s function in missions. In reference to Ephesians 2:20 these were called by Jesus personally and were the initial founders of the church. So a brief summary of what the New Testament apostles did is given to give an overview of who an apostle is. But, the notion of the apostolic roles does promote people to take up the title of apostleship as an office; rather, he implores missionaries to carry the identity of its function, the apostolic function. The term takes us back to the backbone of the book which is to practice cross-cultural missions: to focus where the gospel has not been reached, to plant churches where they do not exist, and discipling others for a global missions impact. In the book Johnson highlights the now standard definitions of reached and unreached people groups. Unreached peoples are made people group who have no indigenous group of believers in adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the locals without external or cross-cultural assistance. While a reached people is a people group with adequate indigenous Christians, and resources to evangelize their local people without cross-cultural assistance. This definition is foundational to understanding missionary ministry apostolic function according to Johnson-it must reach the unreached.

In conclusion Johnson tackles the “where” question of missions and his answer is that missions should “Go where the church does not exist” (222). This is the prime purpose of the gospel and the cross, to seek and save the lost.

My assessment of *Apostolic Function* is that, I find it beneficial to describe the term apostle within the context of the role an apostle plays and to use that as missiological paradigm because it helps place missiology in a healthy and biblical posture of focusing on reaching the unreached.

His assessment that the focus of missions is often on places, but with this apostolic paradigm there is a need to join forces through integration of paradigms to fulfil the apostolic function in reaching the unreached people groups. I believe if missions workers expand their understanding of missions from concentrating on what needs to mature to a more radical mindset such as Johnson proposes as apostolic function, the *missio Dei* fulfillment of God’s mission will be hastened.



*The Spirit Dimension In African Christianity: A Pastoral Study Among the Tumbuka of Northern Malawi* by Silas S. Ncozana. Christian Literature Association of Malawi: Malawi, 2002; 207pp. Reviewed by Felix Chimera Nyika.

Dr. Ncozana's 1985 PhD thesis from Aberdeen University is the basis of this book which explores the phenomenon of possession amongst the Tumbuka from 1881 to 1950, the Livingstonia Mission's response, and what shape and form a pastoral response should take. The first chapter, "Spirit Possession as an African Phenomenon", delves into African and Tumbuka cosmology, examines various facets and explanations of possession, and notes the anti-supernatural bias of the pioneer Livingstonia missionaries who, the author argues, were influenced by the anti-Irvingite polemics of the Church of Scotland.

The second chapter, "Tumbuka History 1780 – 1904", paints a picture of Tumbuka origins: their settlement between the Dwangwa and Songwe rivers in northern Malawi (c. 1400), their loose political organization of independent chiefdoms, economy, social structure, and the ascendancy of the coastal trader Mlowoka and his dynasty in 1780 to its defeat by Zwangendaba's Ngoni in 1840. The author also notes the nature of Tumbuka relations with surrounding tribes (Yao, Tonga, Nkhonde, Maravi, and the Ngoni) and ends the chapter with the entry of European interest in the form of the Livingstonia missionaries in 1881 and the extension of the British Protectorate to the northern region in 1904.

The following chapter, "A Religious History of the Tumbuka Since 1780", surveys the theology of the Tumbuka by examining their notions of God, worship practices, the Chikhangombe Cult based on Nkhamanga Hill, and general and personal eschatology. Influences from the surrounding ethnicities are also examined as a background to what the author delineates as the new forms of possession arising out of such interactions: *vimbuzi*, *virombo*, and *vyanusu*. This is the heart of the book where the author shows that *vimbuzi* and *virombo* are similar as they both involve dancing to manifest the spirit, drinking a herbal concoction, and a sacrificial ceremony where an initiate sucks blood from a live goat until it is dead (*chilopa*). After being healed from the initial sickness through which the ancestral spirits (*vimbuzi*)/animal spirits (*virombo*) have manifested, the initiate himself/herself may become a healer/prophet, a *nchimi*. A *vyanusu*-medium played the role of interpreting events for the community and was regarded as a prophet. Common to all these types of possession is that all these healers are also herbalists.

The next chapter, "Mission and Conversion: 1881 – 1910," shows that spirit possession was foundational to the Tumbuka worldview so that when they finally embraced Christianity it was along such lines. This was contrary to the Livingstonia Mission's rationalistic project which placed a premium on education as a way of combating the Tumbuka spirit-beliefs and thereby evangelizing them. The resulting "Gospel" preached to the Tumbuka was not properly contextualized so that areas of concern to Tumbuka religion, like the role of the ancestors and the continuation of life after death, were not addressed. The mission experienced a breakthrough in evangelization through the power-encounter ministries of W.A. Elmslie's rainmaking in 1886, the sacrificial ministry of William Koyi, and Donald Fraser's conventions (1896-1910) which culminated in a mass revival during the Keswick Convention of 1910 when Rev. Charles Inwood was the guest speaker. However, the author notes that the contemporary Ethiopianist churches of John Chilembwe, Elliot Kamwana, and Charles Domingo, did not concern themselves with such contextualization issues regarding spirit possession as they emulated or aspired to be like their European counterparts. Possession cases presented before the Ekwendeni Kirk Session had

significantly dropped in the 1940s that the author sees this as the decline of possession amongst the Tumbuka.

In his concluding chapter, the author delineates a pastoral approach to dealing with the possessed amongst Tumbuka Christians that is empathetic, Bible-based, and open to a contextualization akin to that of Prophet/Healing AICs. Then he concludes by noting that possession was an enduring phenomenon in the turbulent history of the Tumbuka as it was a release from the frustrations of life, that the missionaries had failed to understand the role of possession in Tumbuka religion and so prohibited their members from patronizing *vimbuzo* ceremonies, and that power over evil spirits, not justification from sin, is the point of entry of the Tumbuka into the Christian faith.

The book would make a great introduction to the religious history of the Tumbuka and the place that spirit possession takes in it. That said, I have the following points to make:

1. I think the study is rather unaware of the Charismatic Revival in Malawi during the time of research, the early 1980s, which would have enriched the study as issues of spirit possession/deliverance were dealt with. One almost feels that the reference to Prophet/Healing AICs as model contextualizers on the possession issue is outdated at this point in Malawian church history since the Charismatic Movement and the emerging Neo-charismatic Churches are at that point addressing the issue of possession in a more biblical manner.
2. The author asserts that the Livingstonia missionaries were affected by the Church of Scotland's polemics against the proto-Pentecostal theology and praxis of Edward Irving but fails to pinpoint how or who amongst them was so influenced. Of course, this raises the whole issue of the cessation of the spiritual gifts versus the continuation of such gifts which I expected to find in his discussion of a Bible-centred approach to combating possession cases.
3. I also expected to find a more robust exegetical study of the texts cited by the author especially since this study represents an African viewpoint. The Bible version the author uses is not indicated so that one wonders whether one is dealing with the author's own translation or not.
4. I also see a truncated pneumatology as the Holy Spirit is spoken often Christologically as the "Spirit of Jesus" without dealing with passages in Acts which has a more developed pneumatology.
5. The discontinuities between spirit possession and Holy Spirit "possession" are not spelled out clearly. Part of it I think is because the author uses the word "possession" in the traditional African sense as well as "possession" by the Holy Spirit – thus accentuating the continuities between Tumbuka religion and Christianity. This may be a great starting point for contextualization but is confusing since in the latter case the Holy Spirit neither forces Himself on a person nor makes a person ill to begin communing with the person.
6. Finally, I also expected that the author would deal with the issue of deliverance as practiced by Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians as a means of ministering to the spirit possessed.

Overall, Ncozana's study is an important reminder of the need to critically contextualize the Gospel message and reminds all that would undertake the cross-cultural missionary endeavour to understand the worldview and practices of the host culture.