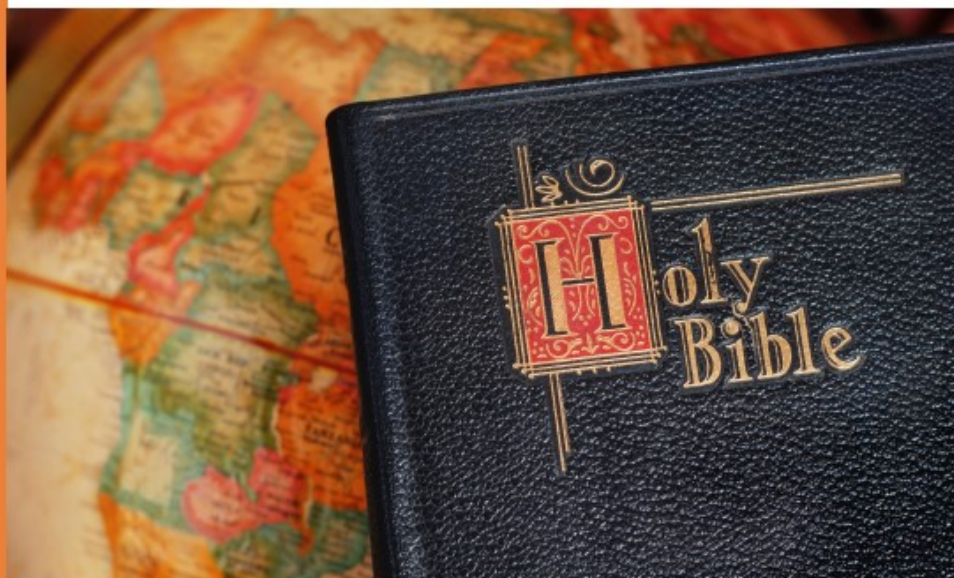


DECEMBER 2015

VOLUME 1

Kērussōmen

A JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE AFRICAN CHURCH



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A PUBLICATION OF CENTRAL AFRICA BAPTIST COLLEGE & SEMINARY

Kērussōmen

A JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE AFRICAN CHURCH



This journal is intended to aid the work of Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary in fulfilling its purpose to train the next generation of servant leaders in Africa for Great Commission living. The journal raises issues of theological importance and practical pastoral concern in order to cultivate Biblical discussion and to build up pastors and other leaders in African churches.

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We welcome submissions to *Kērussōmen* which are in essential agreement with the beliefs and distinctives of Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary. You can read about these at the following link: www.cabcseminary.org/what-we-believe/.

Editorials: submissions should be around 1,000 to 1,500 words each, addressing a topic of practical or pastoral concern.

Articles: submissions should be between 3,000 and 5,000 words in length and be of substantive scholarly nature, addressing a topic of practical Christian concern. Article submissions should demonstrate awareness of and interaction with key resources on the topic at hand and should follow Turabian format.

Submissions may be emailed to the editors: journal@cabcollege.org. The editors reserve the right to refuse publication as well as to require recommended changes as a condition of publication.

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It is a delight for me to write this introduction to the very first Theological Journal for Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary. In February 2016 we celebrate ten years of ministry at the college. At this milestone in our history, the launching of this conservative theological Journal is a testament to God's gracious blessing.

This Journal will reveal our commitment at Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary to the explicit instructions Paul gave to Timothy to "Preach the Word." In the midst of busy schedules and ministry challenges the preacher must heed this charge. This Journal will challenge you to think deeply about doctrine, edify you with Biblical instruction, and encourage you with articles that nourish your soul.

Our Journal has been given a Greek name *Kērussōmen* which means, "Let us preach!" We place this inaugural volume into your hands accompanied by a prayer to God that it will be a valued and helpful contribution to those across Africa who are engaged in the noble task of preaching.

We pray that Paul's exhortation will be reality for every preacher who reads this Journal:

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:2-5 NKJV

Please accept *Kērussōmen* as our way of reaching out to you with loving encouragement as you serve Jesus Christ in gospel ministry.

"Let us preach!"

Philip S. Hunt
President

Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary
Kitwe, Zambia

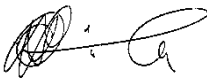
To the Reader:

We are excited to place the very first volume of *Kērussōmen* into your hands. *Kērussōmen* is a theological journal published by Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary. This journal and other regularly published works (such as magazines and newspapers) are known as *periodicals* because new issues of these publications appear at regular intervals. We look forward to adding additional volumes of *Kērussōmen* to your personal bookshelf in the years to come.

Of course, our goal in publishing *Kērussōmen* is not simply to fill empty spaces on the bookshelf. This journal is one additional means for Central Africa Baptist College & Seminary to pursue its institutional purpose: “*training the next generation of servant-leaders in Africa for Great Commission living.*” Perhaps you are wondering how a theological journal can accomplish this. We believe that the Scriptures alone are fully sufficient and authoritative in directing the beliefs and practices of Christians. We hope that *Kērussōmen* becomes a resource for you, not to replace Scripture, but to lead you back to the Scriptures, to cause you to see them in a new light, and to enable you to approach them with better questions.

The contributors to this volume are each graduates of Central Africa Baptist College and are godly Christians whose lives bear the fruit of the gospel. However, we urge you, the reader, to exercise Biblical discernment as you read this volume; the final standard by which believers can test truth is by comparing it with what God has revealed in his Word. Paul commended the Bereans because they did not accept his teaching without first testing Paul’s words against the standard of Scripture (Acts 17:11). We ask you to do no less as you read this volume.

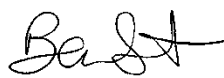
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Chopo C. Mwanza



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THE NEED FOR A MISSION BOARD
Blessings Ndhlovu

William Carey was the very first British Christian to leave his home country as a missionary bearing the gospel. He was a great pioneer who brought the Good News to India over 200 years ago, but his journey was not an easy one. Being one of the very first to go, he faced huge obstacles of financing and preparing for the task of moving his family thousands of kilometers away, with the possibility of never returning. He also faced great opposition at home from those who thought he was foolish for even considering it. Yet, there was one man who committed himself to bearing the load for Carey at home, both of finding support for him, and of keeping in communication with him. His name was Andrew Fuller, and he was the pastor who in 1792 led a small group to form the very first missions sending agency, The Baptist Missionary Society. He never went out as a missionary, but instead he stayed home and worked tirelessly for many years to ensure that those who were sent out would be adequately funded and not forgotten about. William Carey, when reflecting on the beginning of his journey that would eventually lead him to India, imagined himself to be entering a deep and unexplored chasm. He felt it was as if he were saying to Fuller and the rest of the Society, “I will go down, if you will hold the rope for me.” Unquestionably Andrew Fuller did just that.¹

As we look at our own situation today we must ask ourselves, is there anyone holding the rope here in Zambia, so that others among us can go? As we are sending young men out

¹For more information on the life of Andrew Fuller see: John Piper, *Andrew Fuller* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2012). Available online at <http://www.desiringgod.org/books/andrew-fuller.pdf>.

who have heard the call to ministry we need to provide both direction for where they are going to serve the Lord, and support for them as they go. Sending of missionaries has nothing to do with the number of members a church has, but it has to do with obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This command knows nothing of the membership number (small or big) or the financial status of our churches. We always say we can't manage to support our own missionary because our financial capacity is low, but if we put our heads together by having one goal of sending out missionaries it's very possible, and even small churches can participate and send their own missionaries through the help of the other churches and the mission board. Together, we can hold the rope, so that others among us will have both the courage and the means to go.

What is a mission board?

A mission board is an agency that works with churches in order to send missionaries locally or outside the country or even outside the continent in order to carry out the Great Commission of planting churches (Matthew 28:19). A mission board is not a replacement of a church in terms of sending missionaries but its works alongside the churches to carry out the Great Commission.

We need to know that this mission board is not by any means replacing the work of the church in sending its own missionaries but rather working hand in hand with churches to send out missionaries. This means that the mission board will not be above the churches but it will partner with the churches by supporting missionaries, looking out for the welfare of the missionaries and the mission work in the field. The mission board will be an external and independent organization yet it will have members from the local churches. In doing so the board will manage to make its decisions independently and the

churches will remain independent in make decisions without the influence of the board. This arrangement also helps to make sure that the board survives if one church pulls out its membership or support, and to accommodate other like-minded churches in mission work.

The work of the mission board

The work of the mission board is vast but let me give some thoughts that I think are very important for us to understand before we make any decision. A mission board exists:

1. To give general oversight of ministries planted through the churches by the help of the mission board. It also provides accountability between the missionaries and the Director of the Board.
2. To ensure that the ministry is operating in a manner that is financially responsible and in agreement with all financial regulations under which the Board functions and for which it is responsible.
3. To approve an annual budget and receive an annual audit for the finances of the Board.
4. To give opportunities (through churches) to men who are called to serve God by working with churches in sending out missionaries.
5. To ensure that men are trained for the mission ministries that they are sent out to do.
6. The board will also partner with other mission boards in order of provide for the missionaries' needs.
7. The mission board will work hand in hand with the churches that are affiliated with the board to give enough information on the mission progress and needs of the missionary to the churches.

What are some of the benefits of having a mission board?

The good thing about this mission board is that it has many other mission boards to learn from in order to avoid the mistakes that they have made. Also we need to know for sure that we will still make our own mistakes, but we will be praying that they will not be so terrible because we have the advantage of learning from others that have gone ahead of us and that have made big mistakes. So what are the benefits of us having a mission board?

1. A mission board will unite churches. Most of the time we are so occupied with our denomination such that Christianity has turned into a competition stage. Which church is progressing or making an impact in our community? Remember that we are the body of Christ and his body must be united. We should be working to achieve the same goal in Christ's kingdom, not competing. This is the reason why we don't help one another. That is why we are all isolated, busy with our own business and when one church fails in ministry we laugh and mock our friends. It's never right in the sight of God and we are not helping to reach the World. Jesus Christ's prayer shows us his desire for our unity after he left earth in John 17:20–21.
2. All the churches who partner with the board will be involved in mission work no matter how small or big the church might be. Most of the time we give the excuse of not having enough finances to support a missionary, but with the introduction of a mission board it's very possible even for a small church to support one. Here is how it's possible: the mission board will be affiliated with different churches, and all the churches (small or big) will be working together in supporting a particular missionary. This means that these churches will send

their financial support to the mission board in order to support the missionary. The support of every church will be voluntarily, according to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and to the budget that is set by the church in supporting a missionary.

3. This will give opportunity for every church to support or be involved in mission work, and also mission work will continue even if one church pulls out its support because of our bad economy and unsecured work that our members go through. We know that this can cause even our financial tithes go down. But if we work together we are able to cover up the financial deficits.
4. The mission board will open opportunities for our churches to learn about missions work at an early stage of its existence as a church. Imagine, if a one-year-old church can be involved in mission work, how far it can go after twenty-five years of faithfully practicing and obeying the great commission of send out missionaries? We don't do mission work because our foundation was not strong enough to grasp the heartbeat of every true and obedient church.
5. The mission board will be taking some time in teaching churches about missions (through the church's permission) and their responsibility to keep or help a missionary. It's very easy to give tithes or pledges in the offering basket towards mission work and yet have no heart for the sole business of every church. Missionaries or pastors don't just need financial support but also encouragement, prayers and sometimes physical work on the mission ground, like helping in evangelism or teaching during conferences etc.
6. We will also build a strong mission mindset in our churches, not just today but also for the future.

I can go on and on giving the benefits of us forming a mission board, but with the above outlined points I am hoping that we see the importance and need for having a mission board. These were some of the benefits that I wanted to bring to your attention as you think through this.

This board can work really well if many churches come on board and we work together. The more churches join the better this can work and I am encouraging as many churches that have this same passion, who are faithful to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and who have love the lost, please come and let's work together in seeing that this board starts. We are really not looking at how big or small your church is but, whether this is your desire.

Conclusion

We are called to make disciples, to evangelize, and to plant churches. It is not a mistake that each of the Gospels and the book of Acts repeat Christ's command before he went to heaven to be doing this (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46–48, John 15:26–27 and Acts 1:8). All of these passages talk about witnessing, evangelizing, or making disciples, and all talk about the same thing but in different terms. The Holy Spirit wants us to clearly understand that the Great Commission is every church's call. If we are relaxed about this, or we are not even doing it, then we are really going against God. Look at how the first church paid attention to the Great Commission, just 40 days after Christ returned to heaven and the Holy Spirit came, the first thing was to preach the gospel. They never wasted time trying to think how to go about it, but they preached Christ right there and then. Also the book of Acts tells us how these churches took this work seriously. From the first chapters up to the end we see their mission being the Great Commission and they were serious about planting churches.

How about us friend? Why have we neglected this noble, royal, and godly command? We need to go back to the foundation of our call and return to our first love in Christ Jesus. Too often we don't share because we have no love for perishing souls. Too often we don't share the gospel because we are selfish, and God will judge us. It's not just the money that must go, it's not only pastors, and it's also not just for the strong, mature, or indoctrinated brother that should go. Every true Christian must be involved in this task.

Blessings Ndhlovu is a 2013 graduate of CABC's Bible degree program. In 2014 he served one year at Kabwata Baptist Church in Lusaka, Zambia in their pastoral internship program. He is now a missionary pastor through Faith Baptist Church in Garneton, and is planting a church in Twatasha, outside Kitwe. He has a burden to start a mission board such as the one he has described here. If you would like more information about this board and how you can participate, contact him at [blessingsndhlv8@gmail.com](mailto: blessingsndhlv8@gmail.com) or +260 973 62 27 89.

ADAM WHERE ARE YOU?

Edward Mwanisa

This is the frequent question that God continues to pose to the human race, “Adam where you are.” Since the fall of our first parents God has been asking Man to realize that he has left his original position in creation. He has left his position of true happiness and peace (Gen. 1:31).

When God created man, he was to find his fullness in God. Man was to walk each day closer to his creator and find satisfaction in the fact of giving glory to God (Gen. 2:15–17). But when he was tempted with the possibility of being his own god he took it and left the fold of peace and happiness (Gen. 3:1–6). Man moved out of the embrace of God. But God in his loving grace came searching for man saying, “Where are you?” It was not that he did not know where Adam and Eve were, but he was questioning their spiritual state. How they had fallen from grace? In the same way he searches for us today. Through confrontation with the gospel he is calling us, helping us to see the way to true happiness.

After the fall, man learned the true reality of his choice the hard way. When Adam and Eve made that choice they realized their folly. They went hiding from God because of their guilt. That guilt made them run even when no one was chasing them. How many of us run away from God because our conscience condemns us! We are so overwhelmed with guilt that we run from God. We feel he is too righteous and we are not worthy. And it is true he is righteous, but he is also gracious.

Look at the reaction of Peter. Christ had done something good for him, something that he had labored for the whole night without achieving, but instead of saying thank you, the guilt in his heart condemned him. “But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell

down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (Lk. 5:8-10). The Lord Jesus is showing in Peter's life that he came take the guilt away. If he can do it for Peter he is able to do it for you. Do not let the guilt deprive you of the happiness that God only is able to give.

At the fall guilt crept in instead of freedom. In place of peace guilt has come and it is a heavy burden that weighs us down and we cannot handle it. But listen to the invitation of the Lord: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:27-29).

We also see that because of their choice they went hiding out of shame (because they were naked). We look at how we have fallen, the many errors we have made and we feel ashamed. We think, "Who would believe us, with all this baggage of sin and failures." We always look for ways to cover up our shame. Sometimes these covers could be attendance to church services, or doing charitable deeds for others. But look at Adam and Eve's miserable attempt to cover their shame. We cannot hide from God, he sees everywhere: "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13; cf. Ps. 139:1-2).

Furthermore we see that they went hiding because they were afraid. Sin brings fear in us. We often choose the way of sin

to find or express our freedom but instead of freedom it makes us fearful. We fear the outcome of our choice. We are afraid of what people will think of us and also what will happen to us. We can all relate to the experience of Adam and Eve and say, “Yes, this is how I feel and I am always looking to point my finger at someone else” (cf. Gen. 3:10–13). What is the reason for this? This is what sin does to us. We are guilty, ashamed, and afraid. Hence we have become aliens to true happiness.

But God is calling, “Adam where are you,” because the solution to the mess we have caused is nowhere else but only in God. It is God who comes to the rescue of Adam and Eve. He comes to deal with their guilt, their shame, and their fear. He confronts them with truth. Have you eaten from the tree that I told you not to? He pronounces the consequences of their actions but he also provides a solution for them. He did not tell them it is nothing, he tells them what it is. It is sin and it has consequences. It is the same for us today. Our choices are sinful and they have consequences, but God is not just talking about the consequences of our sins. He is also coming to our aid even today.

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). When you look at the efforts of Adam and Eve to cover themselves, you see how insufficient they were because leaves would dry and they could not cover them properly. But God takes the life of another, an animal, to pay for the sins of Adam and Eve and to cover their shame, their fear, and their guilt. In like manner God has provided a covering for us through his beloved Son Jesus Christ. “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

God is calling out to you in this fallen world where you are. He is not calling because he does not know where you are. He knows, but he is calling so that you realize your sins have

alienated you from him. The fall has alienated you from true happiness because true happiness is only achieved when one is closer to God. He wants to extend his grace to you. He wants to cover the shame of your sin. He wants you to experience his full atonement for the penalty you should have suffered because of sin. He wants you to experience the freedom from fear like John the apostle has written: “So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:16–19).

God is calling, “Where are you?” Because in his love he has provided the means of restoring you back to him (Jn. 3:16). That reconciliation to God, our happiness, and our peace is only through faith. “Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:9–13).

***Edward Mwanisa** is a 2009 graduate of CABC. In December of 2015 he will be completing his Master of Arts in Ministry from Piedmont International University and receiving his degree at CABC’s graduation. He is pastoring at Faith Baptist Church in Kakolo, Zambia, and serves as a lecturer in expository preaching at CABC.*

THE CALL TO RESTORATION

Sandala Mwanje and Chopo Mwanza

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chronicles 7:14).

This verse has been frequently quoted recently in church services, interdenominational prayer meetings, and all kinds of programs on television and radio. The general message of such campaigns has been a call to pray to God so that he would heal and restore the social, political, and economic situation in our country. But what if that is a misinterpretation and misuse of the passage? As with every passage of Scripture it is important to have an accurate understanding of what it says and means in its own context before trying to apply the passage to our own lives.

The Context of the Passage

The backdrop of this verse is a historic event in the history of the nation of Israel: the completion and dedication of the temple. In 2 Chronicles 7 Solomon leads the nation in worshiping, praying, and consecrating themselves to God at the opening of their new place of worship. The Lord answers and accepts the temple and sacrifices given, and assures Solomon and Israel that He is a faithful covenant keeping God. But, He also gives them a stern warning: if His people do not honor God and do His will, God's judgment will be upon them. The verse before shows us this, because it describes the punishment God intends to bring upon Israel if they depart from His covenant. But he does not leave them only with the threat of punishment. He also holds out the promise of restoration if they will

acknowledge their error and return to the covenant. It is in this context that the words in our verse are said. The verse then begins with “if” so what follows is a list of conditions to be met before Israel can claim the promise. The wonderful promises of forgiveness and healing of the land are dependent on the fulfillment of the four conditions that are also clearly spelled out in the verse. What are the conditions?

A Call to God’s Children

This condition is marked by the phrases, “my people” and “called by my name.” This is a specific address to God’s children, and more specifically it was addressed to the nation of Israel. Since this verse was a promise to a specific nation, we must limit the *promise* to them only. However, we can seek to draw from it *principles* about the character of God and his expectations for his people. God is reminding his children that His arms are always open, but He will not receive them if they come to him in a proud state. Furthermore, concerning the prayers of those who are not born again, the Word of God says, “But to the wicked God says: What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips” (Psalm 50:16). And elsewhere, “If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9). So, this call is a family matter. God is addressing His children. This is the right place to start; only those who have submitted to God are His children.

Humility

“Humble themselves.” Humility is a disposition that acknowledges the Godhood of God. This is the heart that acknowledges that God’s throne is the ultimate throne in heaven and on earth. A proud heart thinks and says what Pharaoh said to Moses, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” (Exodus 5:2). But a humble person is one who believes in his

heart that without God he can do absolutely nothing! Therefore, in this verse, God was calling his people to come to a place where they realized that God is God!

Relentless Dependence upon God in Prayer

“Pray and seek my face.” Prayer is communion with God. In prayer we talk to God as friend to friend or as a child to his father. To seek his face is to say that God is better than life. It is to desire him above anything or anyone and acknowledge that He is Father, provider, sustainer, and we are His children. This is vastly different from many prayers that want the gift more than the Giver. Would you be content if God himself were the answer to your prayer? All other blessings, both temporal and eternal, spring from this relationship. Do you desire God?

Repentance

The next important but often neglected condition is, “turn from their wicked ways.” In essence, this is repentance and it has to do with forsaking sinful, wicked, evil ways that rob God of his glory. In repentance they were to turn from their wicked ways and turn to God. Repentance always involves a change of direction. A repentant heart is marked by a new Godward direction. When we claim that we have repented, the challenge is to produce fruit in keeping with our repentance. And we know that left to ourselves, we cannot turn from our wicked ways unless the Lord works in us and unless we are brought to a point where we acknowledge our spiritual bankruptcy.

The Promise

Now we come back to the promise, remembering that strictly speaking it is only for Israel as a nation. Observe that it only when they fulfilled the conditions that the blessings they so desired would follow. If they strayed they would be judged, but if

they would then humble themselves, pray and seek him, and turn from their wicked ways, then (1) God would hear (2) God would forgive, and (3) God would heal his people's land. Yes, even their land could be healed on account of His children.

The principle that we can draw from this is that the children of God can be a blessing to the world. As they humble themselves before God and obey and submit to him they become salt and light to the world. They act as a preserving agent, but also serve as a reason for some of the temporal blessings that the world enjoys. However, reducing these promises to mean if we pray, then the kwacha will be transformed and gain against the dollar, or that load shedding will cease, is to miss the whole point altogether. This passage and many others reveal to us that God is concerned with people obeying His word and doing His will so that He may receive the glory, just as Solomon and Israel worshiped Him aright and brought glory to his name.

Oh, that we too may turn to God in humble, prayerful submission, seek His will, repent of our sins, and follow His Word! May our cry today be: "Teach us Lord full obedience, holy reverence, true humility. Test our thoughts and our attitudes, in the radiance of your purity. Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see your majestic love and authority... Speak, O lord till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory."¹

Sandala Mwanje is a 2009 graduate of CABC and served for a time as Dean of Students. He now pastors in Dunedin, New Zealand.

Chopo Mwanza is 2011 graduate of CABC. In 2014 he completed a Master of Arts in Ministry from Piedmont International University. He pastors at Faith Baptist Church in Riverside, Kitwe, and has recently joined the faculty of CABC as Dean of Students.

¹Words taken from the song "Speak O Lord," by Keith and Kristen Getty.

GIVING TO THE LORD: WILLINGLY AND CHEERFULLY

Saidi F. Chishimba Jr.

Most Christians struggle with giving to the Lord. The subject of tithes and offerings is always received as a bitter pill. Though some Christians fully understand this subject and usually give back to the Lord with a cheerful heart, they are the minority.

On the other hand, amidst the struggle, many are still motivated to give because of what they can get out of it. They do not see it as giving back to God what belongs to Him. In a sense, a tithe or an offering is commonly and unconsciously perceived as an investment, a loan to God that will mature in due time and they will reap bountifully. That is wrong! We do not give merely for our benefit. Rather, we give because God has instructed us to do so. We do it for His glory. We do it because it is more blessed to give than to receive, and because God has promised to bless a heart that gives cheerfully.

Therefore, if receiving is not our primary intention of giving to the Lord, how should we go on with our responsibility to give? In fact, if receiving more was the primary reason for giving, we all would be giving selfishly so that we may have more to gratify ourselves. However, though our receiving was never the primary purpose why God established a tithe and all other offerings, God who is full of mercy and grace has still gone ahead to promise that we will receive even more when we give.

In this article I have answered two major questions that Christians struggle with on the subject of giving back to the Lord with the hope that reader will eventually become passionate about giving. I have deliberately and completely avoided the argument about whether tithing is for New Testament believers or not. The spirit of this article has everything to do with the

principle of giving back to God from all our earnings as a way of worship and a reflection of God's attribute of giving. Therefore, call it grace giving or tithing; the principles taught in this article are for every Christian who sees it as his God-given responsibility to give back to God as the Lord prospers him.

Why should I give back to the Lord from all my prosperity?

If God owns all things, including all that I have and would ever have, why does He insist on me still giving back to him? Shouldn't God share with us His creatures and allow us to enjoy all that He has given us? It does not make sense. Who has ever known a mother who insists that every time she gives her children porridge they should give back to her a certain number scoops of the porridge?

Some years back a mother who had been struggling with why and how she should tithe told me that she distributes her tithe among the poor and the needy in her family and on the streets. She saw no need of taking her tithes to the church. Her reason was simply that the church had proven to be very poor at managing God's finances. She would rather be more responsible by doing it herself. She further went on to express her aching heart on misuse of tithes and offerings by some selfish church leaders and pastors. Nonetheless, I did advise her to look for a church that was more responsible financially and also take time to critically study the Bible concerning which way forward for a believer's responsibility to give to the Lord through the local church.

Believers should give to the Lord through the local the church for many reasons. Though the Bible gives many reasons, I have limited this article to the following five:

1. It is a command of the Lord (Prov. 3:9; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7).

2. It is an acts of worship to God (1 Cor. 16:1–3).
3. God would love to see His attribute of giving reflected in every believer's life (John 3:16; Rom 5:12).
4. To withhold giving is a recipe for severe chastening (Mal. 3:8–9; Luke 16:10–11).
5. Because God's pleasure and blessings rest upon those who give (Mal. 3:10; Acts 20:35; 2 Cor. 9:6–8; Heb. 13:16).

How should I give to the Lord as He prospers me?

Understanding that giving back to the Lord is every believer's God-given responsibility, here are four practical nuggets of advice. When these are practiced the believer will be able to give willingly and cheerfully.

1. Renew your mind (Romans 12:2).

Somebody has said that the greatest fight of all times happens in the mind. If you can win it there you can win a fight anywhere. Even a person with a heart that seeks to be great at giving back to the Lord must first win the battle in the mind. Therefore, begin today to transform your mind with the truth of Scripture on tithes and offerings. Did you know that from all your earnings belongs the Lord's portion? Acknowledge it, and plan to give back to the Lord before you have your earning in hand. Let the issue be dealt with first in the mind. As you plan to give do the following:

- Decide to give from all your earnings.
- Decide whether you will give in material form, cash, or cheque depending on your earnings.
- Decide on being accountable to God through your local church. If you so wish, ask the church to make a record available to you at the end of the year for your tax claim.

- Decide when is the best time of the month for you to give (in case you have multiple sources of income).

2. *Discipline yourself with your giving obligation (Matthew 22:21).*

Institutions like NAPSA (National Pension Scheme Authority) and ZRA (Zambia Revenue Authority) are very serious about your contributions. In fact, the law behind these institutions has seen many jailed for evasion. Similarly, as individuals, we are so serious with our private businesses. We work hard to avoid losses. Employees too, are dead serious with the affairs and finances of the companies they work for. Therefore, in like manner also:

- Be serious with your giving.
- Discipline yourself so as to be consistent.

3. *Find a small box in which to lay aside your collections (1 Corinthians 16:2).*

Though the box may not be mandatory, the principle is worth employing. This will be very helpful on the occasion that your income varies from day to day or from week to week. Decide every time on how much you will give every time monies come in and put it in the box or an account. Then at month end or weekend open the box and take your money to your local church.

4. *Incorporate tithing or giving into your budgets.*

Though I may have already mentioned this earlier, I would like to add a little more emphasis. The most common mistake that people make during their budgeting is putting giving or tithe aside after expenditure. However, the right thing to do is, whenever you draw up your budget remember to do the following:

- Subtract your giving first not as an expenditure but as your first fruit unto the Lord.
- Then followed by your debts.
- Then your savings/investments.
- And lastly your expenditures.

Giving to the Lord, from the time it was first demonstrated by Abraham to the King of Salem, has never been a burden. Abraham found joy and pleasure in giving a tenth of his spoils to the King. Moses had to stop the people from giving because there was no room for storage. The nation of Israel practiced it as one way to worship Jehovah. David gave with all his heart and vowed never to give to the Lord that which will cost him nothing. Paul admonished the church at Corinth to persevere in grace giving as much as they did in other graces. And you and I can also join the list of men and women who worship God through the giving.

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POSTMODERNISM IN AFRICA

Andrew Matoke Ogeto

For those of us living in Africa it would seem irrelevant to talk about postmodernity. This is a word that you barely hear anyone use even in very serious conversations. But just because the term is absent does not mean that the reality of it is not present. Moreover, there is not much that is written on the subject of postmodernity in Africa, but a quick look at wider books on this topic will prove that the definition of postmodernity is as varied as the authors themselves. However, there is consensus across the board on its reality and that is why theologians and historians bother with this term.

A diachronic approach might be of help as a beginning. The word “postmodernity” is made of two other words: post and modern. At the very basic level this means that postmodernity came after modernity or the age of modernity. The period of modernity was clearly marked with absolutes, right or wrong, unshakeable or unquestionable foundations about truth and life. The antithesis to modernity is now postmodernity. This was a speedy reaction against the mentioned tenets of modernity.

The primary discontinuity that exists between these two periods in history is in the area of what is called epistemology, or the way we can know or gain knowledge. According to the period of thought known as modernity, there were established foundations that were the basis upon which we gained knowledge. For example, the belief in a divine universal God was almost an unquestioned tenet. Killing, cheating, or stealing were viewed across the board as evil not only to be shunned against but also punished. Even when theism was questioned there were enough intellectual structures in place to help one arrive at a theistic conclusion. But when postmodernity arrived these very

foundations were not only questioned but replaced. Therefore, the absolutist modernist convictions were no longer self-evident.

So, according to postmodernism, how we arrive at truth is no longer dependent upon agreed tenets, but on the individual. D.A. Carson asserts that “postmoderns, no less than moderns, begin with the finite ‘I,’ but the inferences they draw are quite different. Each ‘I’ is different from every other ‘I,’ so the point of view expressed is bound to be different.... After all, each individual ‘I’ is a member of a defined culture with a particular set of assumptions, values, structures of thought, linguistic usages, and the like. Each group, culture, or identifiable unit of people will invariably look at things a little differently from the way people in other cultures look at things.”¹

Therefore, postmodernism produces several things. Firstly, truth invariably becomes relative. So that whatever you think is true is only true because of where you grew up, what your culture thought was important and so forth. One cannot dare to be objective or dogmatic about anything, and if you dare to be then that is just relative to you. Secondly, you cannot question or critique anyone. Any such attempt and you will be labeled as intolerant, narrow minded or bigoted. Thirdly, since everyone has a valid truth we must accept each view. Inclusivity is hailed as a big virtue. Lastly, when it comes to matters of religion you should treat them as private lest you offend your neighbor who might have a valid religious belief, though different than yours.

I hope you have already seen that this kind of postmodernism is rife among us. I hope your Biblical grid is already helping you to see the errors in postmodernism. Brethren, I hope you have started to shun any view or model in

¹D.A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 95.

today's society that seems to suggest that you are the source of truth, that there are no absolutes, or that truth is relative to an individual, culture or community. Yes, we are finite and sinful beings, and thus not able to know everything perfectly. But it will be even worse if we heed or embrace the so called "only alternative" offered by postmodernism. That is relativism.

The omnipotent gracious God has promised that He is able to open the eyes of our understanding that we may see wondrous things from His Word (Psalm 119:18). The Triune God has revealed himself in the Scriptures and has promised us that we shall "know the truth and the truth shall set [us] free" (John 8:31-32). Isn't this such a great comfort! That though we are sinful and blind the Lord gave up His Son as the light of the world that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life. In a wicked world that is in limbo, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, we have a God who we can approach to direct our hearts to be anchored? We look to Christ as revealed in the Bible. He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). He is the only name under heaven given among men by which they can be saved (Acts 4:12). God's word is truth: dependable, divine, sufficient, a sanctifier, food for the soul and a life giver. In a world that says that every religion has something to contribute the Scriptures warn us that he who does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God (2 John 9).

We have a message to proclaim to a confused and perishing world. A world that is trusting in the arm of flesh, the arm of intellect, the arm of self-image, the arm of independence. We can confidently point them to, "Thus says the Lord!" Let's point them to the Word of Life. Let's expound the breathed out Word of God which is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

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DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF MINISTRY

Nixon Obunga

A personal philosophy of ministry seeks for clear reasons for engaging in particular practices in the work of the ministry. Stated succinctly, it is *why we do what we do*. All churches and church leaders follow a particular philosophy whether they realize it or not. For some, numbers are most important, and therefore their strategies will not be much different from that of any corporate marketing department. Others are more consumer-oriented, and therefore they pursue what makes the “customers” happiest, regardless of what they may truly need. If we are not careful to be intentional and Biblical in determining our own personal philosophy, then it will surely be shaped by whatever ministry pressures or cultural practices are most demanding. To avoid this, we must intentionally orient our own view of ministry around Scripture, and allow it to be our guide for both the *hows* and *whys* of the task of ministry. This article seeks to model this by examining what a Biblical philosophy of ministry might look like relative to separation, outreach, leadership, education, and worship.

Biblical Separation

Philip Ryken observes that two *-isms* are characteristic of these postmodern times: *relativism* and *narcissism*.¹ He recounts a time when he was discussing with a stranger the recent rulings by the supreme court of the United States which effectively legalized same-sex marriages across all the fifty states. His conversation partner flatly stated, “*Everything is acceptable*,” and that, after trying to re-interpret Romans 1 so as to deny that it frowned upon homosexual relationships. This prevailing cultural

¹Philip Ryken, *City on a Hill* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2003), 18.

climate has equally impacted the church with some seeing it as something totally incredulous that a congregation would hold someone to a standard of belief and practice to the extent of separating from the individual for persistent violation.

Definition and Explanation

Biblical separation, as defined by Ernest Pickering, “is the implementation of the Scriptural teaching that demands repudiation of any conscious or continuing fellowship with those who deny the doctrines of the historic Christian faith, especially as such fellowship finds expression in organized ecclesiastical structures, and which results in the establishment and nurture of local congregations of believers who are free from contaminating alliances.”²

Separation, Unity, Love and Holiness

Biblical separation is a Scriptural teaching and not necessarily the invention of some schismatic and unloving individuals. Granted, it is possible to separate for reasons and in a manner that legitimizes the charge of being schismatic and unloving. Biblical separation, if pursued for the right reason and done in the right spirit, will always be in the interest of fostering true unity and pure love. Unity that ignores basic doctrinal differences is pretentious whereas love which ignores truth is defiled. Truth and love must never be unshackled (Eph. 4:15; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 John 5:2). Oftentimes non-separatists charge separatists with being unloving and the latter, without disputing the charge, reply that the former are not concerned with holiness, thus implying that holiness and love are two ideas in opposite tension. It is however not only possible but necessary

²Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, 2nd ed. (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2008), 13.

to have both love and holiness in increasing degrees. Mark Sidwell emphasizes the necessity of both virtues when he writes, “A holiness not based on genuine love for God will always be a false holiness...Those who truly love will zealously pursue true holiness, since people’s likeness to Christ is both God’s interest and their own highest interest.”³ Several passages teach the doctrine of Biblical separation. In 2 Cor. 6:14–18 Paul warns against being “unequally yoked” with unbelievers. In Romans 16:17–18, he urges believers to “mark and avoid” divisive people teaching doctrine that is contrary to that which was delivered to them. Separation is not an exclusively Pauline or even a New Testament doctrine. Passages like Lev. 20:26, Num. 31, Josh. 23 and numerous others point to the necessity of separation. God’s holiness demands that believers separate from evil.

The Basis for Separation

Separation is to be pursued not on the basis of some personal vendetta or preferences but rather on the basis of clear, determined, and continuing denial of the doctrines of historic Christian faith. Not everything is a legitimate cause for separation. It is also important to separate from those who, although conservative in doctrine, refuse to separate from those who deny fundamental doctrines of the faith, and in so doing authenticate their beliefs and lifestyle. McCune writes, “The Bible teaches separation from Christians who are doctrinally careless or who are content to walk with those who deny the faith.”⁴

It is especially important to separate from apostate ecclesiastical organizations—these would include

³Mark Sidwell, *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation*. (Greenville, SC: Journeyforth, 1998), 25.

⁴Rolland McCune, *Inside Look*, Accessed at <https://www.dbts.edu/pdf/shortarticles/insidelook.pdf> on 12/07/15.

denominational fellowships, inter-denominational bodies, national church associations, as well as parachurch agencies—since participation is an endorsement and perpetuation of their particular error. Specific application of this rule militates against participating in ecumenical evangelistic endeavors, for instance, which only serve to obscure a correct understanding of the essence of the gospel. Commenting on the Billy Graham’s policy of sending converts to the churches of their choice during ecumenical evangelistic endeavors, Pickering warns, “Part of the responsibility of any evangelist is to guide his converts into churches that are going to teach them the scriptures and the way of the Lord. To send them to churches where the gospel is not proclaimed and the whole counsel of God taught is a serious offense.”⁵

The Goal of Separation

As has already been intimated above, Biblical separation aims for the purity of the church. Separation is often presented in negative terms. There is need to emphasize the positive goal of Biblical separation. It is important that those practicing Biblical separation do all in their power not to project the image of being cantankerous quarrelsome individuals, but be seen to be genuinely concerned with God’s honor.

Outreach

Worldviews

In the Great Commission Jesus commands that we make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19–20). Later in Acts 1:8, Jesus reiterates that his disciples are to be his witnesses *to the ends of the earth*. The church has a global mission, which is to proclaim

⁵Pickering, 161.

the gospel message across the ethnic and cultural divide. While the gospel itself is supra-cultural, its proclamation is within cultural contexts to persons with particular worldviews. Since a *worldview* is a grid through which an individual processes what is happening around them, everyone has a worldview whether they realize it or not. Nick Pollard offers a loose definition of worldview: “As individuals develop, they do seem to adopt certain answers to the fundamental questions of life. These answers are put together into a comprehensive system—a view of the world. At the same time, however, this view of the world becomes the way they view the world.”⁶ An understanding of the worldview of the people we are trying to reach will help us couch the gospel in terms that can be better understood by the recipients (Acts 17:22–31). If we were evangelizing those of the Hindu religion or any other pantheists, for instance, we will emphasize that Christ makes exclusive demands upon the individual. Pro-homosexual arguments will typically reveal a relativistic mindset which asserts that there is nothing fundamentally good or bad; there are no absolutes. Believers need to be equipped to answer these kinds of challenges. Pollard provides four issues to consider when evaluating world views. First, we must identify the worldview. Often, there are many different worldviews operating in the same individual. Life does not always divide so neatly. Second, we must analyze the worldview. We must test it for coherence, truth, and efficacy. Third, we must affirm what is true with the worldview. Acknowledging what is true will lend some credibility to our witness. Finally, we must discover and repudiate what is wrong.⁷ Effective evangelism is not a hit and run affair. Debunking firmly

⁶Nick Pollard, *Evangelism Made a Little Less Difficult* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 35.

⁷Ibid, 48–56.

held beliefs that have been developed over time often takes patient and loving engagement.

Friendship Evangelism

For the purposes of this paper, *friendship evangelism* will be defined loosely as the relational approach to evangelism.⁸ This does not mean that there is a set amount of time that must elapse before the gospel is proclaimed. Nor does it mean that the unbeliever must be the one to broach the question. Rather than being an excuse for inaction, *friendship evangelism* acknowledges that sometimes people are so detached from the gospel that its truths must be given in small incremental doses and modeled in real life if it is to make any sense to them. Ministry to Muslims, for instance, works better in the context of relationship. Unfortunately, we are living in an increasingly individualistic fast paced world that has little time for quality relationships. In fact many people have a better relationship with their phone than with any real person. This is not helped by the teaching in some quarters which limits any meaningful relationships with unbelievers to a 10 minute direct sermon. Jesus himself faced and resisted opposition regarding his association with unbelievers (Mk 2:17; Luke 5:27–30). While it is true that we must be careful not to be unequally yoked (2 Cor. 6:14), not all interaction with unbelievers constitutes a yoke.

Compassionate Ministry

There is a popular notion in some church traditions that any effort to help people materially as a means of evangelism only serves to muddy the gospel message. Any such benevolent action is dubbed “social gospel” and shunned as a liberal

⁸Rick Richardson, *Evangelism Outside the Box* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 70.

philosophy. It is assumed that any conversions arising from such a ministry will be disingenuous and ill-motivated. These concerns are not all together unreasonable. Just as a child may want to visit a particular uncle merely because of the cake she is offered there, there are people who attach themselves to a congregation for material gain, whether contracts for upcoming projects or a bag of maize meal for famished bodies. However, that a good thing might be abused does not warrant its neglect.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus identifies the sheep with those who showed compassion to the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the sick and the imprisoned. Conversely, the goats are identified with those that neglected these people (Matt. 25:34–41). It is crucial that we understand that Jesus is not teaching salvation by works. Ryken is adamant, “Whatever this prophecy means, it does not contradict the Biblical message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.”⁹ Jesus commanded us to love even our enemies (Mt. 5:44). A love that totally neglects the most basic needs of people is defective. It is true that works of charity can be abused, and so it behooves the church to have discernment and policies that lessen the risk of abuse. Timothy gave just such a suggestion in relation the widows in the church (1 Tim 5:3). When a definite decision (conversion) is required before destitute people are helped, it is not in the least surprising that there will be many people who will be willing to lend allegiance as long as the “gravey train” keeps coming.

Leadership

“Everything rises or falls on leadership.” So goes a famous saying. While much has been written on the topic of leadership

⁹Ryken, 152.

in secular circles, the Scriptures' conception of leadership varies greatly from that of popular culture.

Servant Leadership

The world generally celebrates strong leaders who get the work done. The focus is usually in accomplishing a task using the least amount of resources in the shortest time and often, by whatever means possible. The leaders occupy the largest spaces, enjoy the best perks, often do the least amount of work but get the most credit. There is a clear hierarchical system in place where the subordinates exist to carry out the directives of their superiors. The Biblical conception of church leadership, whilst admitting something of a hierarchy, does not attach all importance on the leader. The church leader must not dominate those under his influence for his own personal benefit. Rather than using people as stepping stones for some other end, the church leader knows that the people are an end in themselves. He is to serve God by serving people. In simple terms, the church leader is not a "ruler" leader but a "servant" leader. Christ, responding to the spoken request of James's and John's mother, as well as the hidden desire of the other disciples, gives a revolutionary teaching that the disciples, unlike the princes of the gentiles who dominated their subjects, were to minister and serve those under their care (Matt. 10: 25–28). The significance of the use of two words *διακονος* (*diakonos*) and *δουλος* (*doulos*) is perhaps best captured in D.A Carson comments: "One of the ironies of language is that a word like 'minister'...has become a badge of honor and power in religion and politics. But lest the full force of his teaching be lost, Jesus repeats it in v. 27 with the stronger word *δουλος*."¹⁰ The apostle Peter would later echo the

¹⁰D.A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, and Luke: The Expositors Bible Commentary* vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 432.

words of Christ, urging the shepherds to feed the flock and exercise oversight, yet not as *lord's over God's heritage* (1 Peter 5:1–3). Matt Williams explains that the servant leader will have a submissive spirit—as exemplified by Christ's washing of the disciples' feet as well as his voluntary subjection to his earthly parents, a sensitive spirit—as demonstrated by the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, and a sacrificial spirit—as epitomized in Christ's ultimate act of redemption.¹¹ The Scriptures therefore do not countenance the “celebrity” or “rock star” pastor status.

Shared Leadership

In his important work *Biblical Eldership*, Alexander Strauch makes a convincing case for plurality of elders as being the norm for church governance. He observes that the New Testament presents churches as being led by more than one elder (Acts 14:23; 15; 20:17,28; James 5:14; Titus 1:5; 1 Thess. 5:12–13).¹² Simply put, a one-pastor led church does not meet the standard for Biblical church leadership. It must be conceded that most churches will have only one pastor at some point, especially at the initial stages. Still, deliberate effort must be made towards plurality and away from singular headship.

Plurality of elders does not simply mean many pastors. It is not merely a multiplication of leaders but a true division of leadership, a shared leadership. In this model of leadership all the pastors consider themselves to be equals. They operate as a team, each providing significant leadership and not merely existing to implement the decisions of the “senior” pastor. Unanimous agreement may be required for significant decisions, but at the same time policies are put in place so that the

¹¹Ken Collier and Matt Williams, *Biblical Leadership: Becoming a Different Kind of Leader* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador, 2004), 59–63.

¹²Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), chapter 2.

requirement does not bog down the church. This “team” leadership style does not necessarily preclude delegation of tasks and ministry responsibilities. Strauch discusses the advantages of shared leadership as balancing people’s weaknesses, lightening the workload, and providing accountability. A different but related issue is that of *every-member involvement*. Just as leadership must be shared in the eldership, ministry must be shared in the membership. The leaders must train and equip the church to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4).

Qualified Leadership

Paul lists the qualities needed for church leaders (1 Timothy 3). It may be a little surprising that the list seems to especially focus on the leaders’ moral qualifications. He must not be quarrelsome, violent, a drunkard, greedy, or a lover of money, but should be blameless, vigilant, sober, hospitable, and of good behavior. Elders, if married must be faithful to their wives in committed monogamous relationships. They must also be able to teach. These days we have many churches being led by charlatans who are not in the least ashamed to admit that they are in a sexual relationship with persons other than their wives. Divorce, even multiple divorces, and remarriage seems to no longer disqualify a man for pastoral leadership. Quite a few denominations are softening their stand against homosexual marriages and are changing their policies to reflect the cultural shift. For many of them money and riches are to be pursued as evidence of God’s blessings. For a church to truly influence the community it must hold to the standard outlined in the scriptures for its leaders. In fact, these qualities are to be desired by all in the church.

Education

Definition

Education, in the context of the church, is perhaps virtually synonymous with discipleship. The purpose of such education is to develop mature believers. Marshall and Payne explain that whereas the word *training* in modern English “normally relates to becoming proficient in some practice or art or profession, in the New Testament *training* is much more about Christian thinking and living than about particular skills or competencies.”¹³ Yes, there are skills and competencies to be gained—teaching (1 Tim. 3:2) and apologetics (1 Pet 3:15) for instance—but always in the context of the gospel. As Marshall and Payne clarify, “Skills must never be separated from the gospel—from the truth of sound doctrine, and the godly character that accords with it. It is easy to focus on skills as an end in themselves, and to put too much trust in them.”¹⁴ In Matthew 28:19–20, Jesus commissions his followers to “make disciples” as they go, and to teach them *to obey* everything he has commanded. Education (training, discipleship) is not merely for cognitive purposes but should result in a lifestyle change that glorifies God. Similarly, Timothy extols the indispensable value of the Scriptures in teaching and identifies the goal of such activity as spiritual maturity which leads to good works (1 Tim. 3:16–17).

People before Programs

Many times the success of a church is measured by the size of its auditorium, the number of attendees, and the popularity of

¹³Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind-shift that Changes Everything* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2009), 70.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 78

its programs. Often, the only avenue for service is to fit oneself in one of the existing programs. Sometimes programs are created just so that someone will find something to do and not because a genuine need has been identified. Payne suggests that people should be put first and ministries built around them.¹⁵ This mindset ensures that programs serve people and not vice-versa. Since ministry is about people there can never be a time when there is no avenue for service in a local church. There are many contexts of ministry that can be explored instead of relying on the traditional four—choir, pastor/preaching, Bible study, and the Sunday school.

The Disciple Making Process

Gary Tangeman provides a four stage process for discipleship and argues that it was Jesus' own strategy. The four steps are evangelism, edification, equipping, and encouragement.¹⁶ Marshall and Payne have a similar chart of what they call the "gospel growth process." They identify the four steps as outreach, follow-up, growth, and training. Marshall writes, "If every Christian is a potential vine-worker, then training is that stage of Christian growth in which people are equipped and mobilized and resourced and encouraged to do that work."¹⁷ Marshall and Payne are quick to point out that much of this "training" happens in informal settings. It involves relationship and imitation (Phil 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:14–17; 1 Cor. 10:32–11:1; 1 Thess. 1:4–7).¹⁸ It is not just about developing competencies but developing character. Many churches consider the task of discipleship done when one has been evangelized,

¹⁵Ibid., 18.

¹⁶Gary Tangeman, *The Disciple Making Church in the 21st Century* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 1996), 64.

¹⁷Marshall and Payne, 85.

¹⁸Ibid., 71.

converted, and completed a twelve week “discipleship program.” This is defective thinking that betrays ignorance of the true nature of discipleship. If the goal of discipleship is spiritual maturity, then it is difficult to see how that can be achieved in twelve short weeks. In fact, it can be argued that discipleship is a lifelong process. The *disciplers* themselves are in constant need of discipleship.

A Blend of Structured and Informal Training

The church should be encouraged to engage in informal training of others. Believers should be ministering to each other, as well as reaching out to the lost on an ongoing basis. Every member should be involved in ministry, both the doing of it as well as the training of others in informal settings as they watch, feel, and learn. That being said, it is equally important that there be times for structured training with a determined duration, discernible curriculum, and specific objectives. Still, even with the formal mode, it is important to incorporate informal aspects which enhance learning. These, for instance, would include role plays, discussions, as well as any practical outworking of the lesson. It is better if these sessions are of a practical help to the participants themselves as they “open up” and minister to each other. Too often the church building becomes just another lecture hall, filling heads without touching hearts.¹⁹

Worship

Definition

Many Christians talk about worship but have never taken the time to critically examine what it really means to worship.

¹⁹Robert W. Kelleman, *Equipping Counselors for Your Church* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2011), 251.

For many, worship is an activity that happens on Sunday or any other prescribed day. David Peterson gives a much broader definition when he writes, “The worship of God is essentially an engagement with him on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible.”²⁰ Peterson argues that the traditional definition of *attributing worth* “leaves open the possibility of people making their own assessment of God’s worth and the response which they consider to be adequate.”²¹ Since humanity is completely under the corruption of sin, any independent assessment of the “worth-ship” of God is bound to be defective. The knowledge of God and his requirements for relationship can only be attained via divine revelation.

The words translated *worship* in the original language reveal a range of meaning. The first word is προσκυνέω (*proskuneo*), which occurs no less than sixty times in the New Testament, and means “to prostrate or to pay homage.” Peterson clarifies that this prostration (more properly a bowing or bending down) was generally accompanied with an attitude of thanksgiving. The other word which is also translated worship is λατρεύω (*latreuō*), and it carries the meaning of “to serve.” The significance of this is that worship must not be viewed only in “cultic” terms.²²

Why Corporate Worship?

There is growing apathy towards corporate worship. The argument is made that private worship can just be as fulfilling as corporate worship. Additionally, with advances in technology, there are other options for “corporate” worship other than a physical meeting in a “brick and mortar” church. It is possible to stream live church services or join a virtual church. While there

²⁰ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 55.

²¹Ibid., 17.

²²Ibid., 70.

may be benefits in having “virtual” churches and a plethora of sermons online, to use that argument as an excuse for avoiding meeting physically with other brethren and worshipping as a community reveals a defective understanding of what the church is all about. The accountability found in a body of believers literally meeting in a definite location is generally absent in those virtual spaces. A believer desperately in need of some church discipline is unlikely to get it from a virtual church. Concrete expressions of love are difficult to convey virtually. A virtual hug is less comforting, if at all. Part of the motivation for shunning literal gatherings for online meetings, it seems, is the fact that one can choose who to interact with and for how long. The “mess” that can result from interacting with people is easier to control. That mess, however is one of God’s ordained means for spiritual growth.

Apart from the fairly well known Hebrews 10:25, there are numerous verses in the New Testament that stress church as community. These “one another” verses are too numerous to be exhaustive here, but include Mk. 9:50; Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:11; James 5:16; 1 Peter 4:9; Eph. 4:2; and Col. 3:13. The Bible does not countenance a situation where a believer is content to only worship privately and not engage with the community of fellow believers. Whereas it should be conceded that some measure of “one another-ing” is possible in virtual spaces, the benefit of “community” is better realized when believers interact in real, literal, physical, geographical spaces. Again, whereas it is desirable that believers meet and interact even outside the context of a “formal” church service that must not preclude them meeting in that manner.

The Role of Music in a Worship Service

Music plays an important role in worship. There are those of the opinion that music is dispensable, something to be

endured as they wait for the main attraction: the sermon. James Christensen disagrees: “Music is a vital part of worship. It helps us to identify with the various moods in worshipping God. We need music to ‘worthily magnify the Lord.’”²³ On the other end of the spectrum are those whose sole purpose is to be entertained, coming to break a jig to some deafening music.

Music must not be an end in itself but a means of worshipping God. In simple terms then, if after the service one is primarily impressed by the aesthetic complexity of the musical form and not enamored by the God that the music was supposed to be pointing to, then something has failed—the music, the individual, or both. Atchison is right when he writes, “When the music is so powerful, so striking, so novel, or so difficult to sing—or so bad in quality!—that the attention of the people tends to be drawn to itself, then it is no longer a humble servant of the liturgy.”²⁴ Music must serve the liturgy and not vice versa.

One practical application is that church planters must not insist that the planted churches match the planting churches in every detail. Music that is helpful in focusing attention to God in one culture may be barely intelligible in another. Sometimes the solution is to teach and therefore create appreciation for the particular form or piece of music, and thus enable it to accomplish its purpose. Other times it is better to have a different choice of music selection. Far too many people in services scattered in the villages sing what they do not understand in the least just because a missionary came with a load of hymnbooks from his home country. That is pointless.

²³James L. Christensen, *Don't Waste Your Time in Worship* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revel, 1978), 15.

²⁴Herbert W. Bateman, *Authentic Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2002), 187.

Conclusion

We do not have the liberty of formulating a philosophy of ministry however we want. Effective ministry must be firmly built upon the Scriptures and not on any prevailing cultural mindset. There has always been pressure to take the easy road and affirm every new fad as legitimate. However, assimilation of worldly ideas and philosophies only serves to rob the church of its edge to be an effective witness for Christ. So let us be intentionally Biblical as we seek to set the course of our ministries. This paper has attempted to model what that might look like in the areas of separation, outreach, leadership, education, and worship, but it is only just the beginning. We must allow the Bible to determine to shape of all aspects of our ministries if we are to be faithful to our Lord and serve effectively as his under-shepherds.

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HOW HAVE AFRICAN TRADITIONS AFFECTED A PROPER VIEW OF GOD AND WORSHIP?

John G. Njoroge

Africa like any other continent has faced many challenges in terms of development in Christianity. Undoubtedly, “Christianity has expanded enormously since 1950s, and traditional religion has declined.”¹ This is largely as a result of Western missionaries who by God’s grace came into Africa and shared the gospel with many Africans. The concept of God in Africa was not completely unheard of, but it was a subjective knowledge because of lack of an absolute authority, the Scriptures. Traditional Religion however, has a wrong understanding of who God is and how people should relate to Him. The purpose of this paper is to show how African traditions have significantly affected a proper understanding of God the Almighty, and worship of Him.

Theologically proper worship of Yahweh demands a proper understanding of His person and His work in creation. This will be demonstrated by looking at some cultural traditions in Africa that have damaged the worship of the true God and then showing a Biblical way of worship. The continent of Africa has fifty-four different countries, and therefore it would be impossible to do a case study for every country. Instead, examples have been selected from a few different people groups in order to represent the practices of many African communities. The following excerpt from a poem by Karel Maans illustrates the idea of the variety observed in different African countries and points to the unity that is enjoyed by all African people on the continent.

¹Elizabeth Isichei, *From the Antiquity to the Present: A History of Christianity in Africa* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1995), 324.

Different countries, but still children from the soil
Lord creator of heaven and earth
Thank you for the beauty of our land
This is for sure Africa is in Your hands

Open spaces far a field, pureness of thee eye
Countries shape like a puzzle on your belly
Rich in diamonds, gold and iron
We love this nature, we love this land

Pink, green, blue and yellow
colours from thee flowers
All created by YOUR hands all in shape none out of place
We are the children from this land
Mother Africa, we are the children from your soil²

This however does not mean that all African countries follow one philosophy of worship. There are undeniable similarities, and those are the focus of this paper.

African Traditional Religion: Conception of God

In Africa, just like in any other continent, there are beliefs about God and knowledge that is claimed about God. These beliefs or knowledge significantly affect the lives of the members of the community with measures laid down to deal with those who reject the beliefs about the god followed in a particular community. Each of Africa's fifty-four countries have cultures that identify the people therein and shape their practices, behavior patterns, linguistic traditions and concepts of life. The

² Karel Maans, "Different countries, but still children from the soil," (Poemhunter, <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/different-countries-but-still-children-from-the-soil/>), (Accessed on 20/7/2013).

purpose of this paper is not to look at every African country and analyze its understanding of God, but to describe the god of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and show that he is not the God of the Bible.³

ATR can be defined as “a loose system of belief that finds its authority in tradition and cultural beliefs.”⁴ This system is passed down from one generation to another through various means of communication that differ or are similar in different cultures. The god of ATR is well known by people, and he is referred to with respect and honor. In the Kikuyu community of central Kenya for instance, God is referred to “mwene nyaga” which is to say “the owner of snow” among many other names.⁵ The Kikuyu people worshiped facing Mount Kenya where there is snow on the peaks. All they knew was that there is a cold thing on the mountain where no one has ever been. So they came up with the name of their God as the “the owner of snow.” This understanding of God is lacking because it means that those who are not near Mount Kenya are disadvantaged.

The god of Africa is one and is viewed as being the Supreme Being, the spirit creator of all things.

He is understood to be unique and set apart from man and other lesser spirit beings. He has always existed, he knows everything, and he is everywhere. God is understood to be the supreme ruler, the all-powerful one who does as he

³African Traditional Religion is also referred to as ATR by different writers. For quick reference I will use the same initials in this paper.

⁴Philip Hunt. Ed. “African Traditional Religion, An Apologetic,” (June 18, 2008), 4.

⁵I am Kikuyu by tribe and so the stories about God are not new to me. I first learnt about “Mwene Nyaga” while in primary school where we were taught in school on the topic. This is common with all tribes for it is one way of preserving their cultural beliefs.

please. God is accepted to be overseer of all things, yet he is distant god, removed from his creation...The God of Africa has turned over the running of daily life to the spirit world.⁶

Others have noted that the actual number of gods recognized in Africa cannot be known, while someone said that there are about 195 gods recognized in Africa by name. The Tonga people of Zambia worshiped Nyaminyami, the god of Zambezi River.⁷ This god is said to have a body of a serpent and the head of a fish. He is definitely not exactly the same with the god of the Kikuyu of Central Kenya.

The god of ATR is not the God of the Bible. It is evident from the description above that there is a great distinction between the God of the Bible and the god of ATR although there are undeniable similarities. African Traditions have ruined the true understanding of the God of the Bible and what has remained is a subjective image.

African Traditional Religion: Conception of Man

African traditions have a different understanding of who man is, and this has negatively affected the worship of true God. According to ATR, man is dichotomous by nature. He is composed of the body and spirit. His life is valued from birth to death. There are rituals that are carried out by parents and community leaders when a child is born in the name of removing bad luck in the child's life as the child grows up. The Akamba people of Kenya believe that the ancestors play a great role in childbirth. They "believe themselves surrounded by innumerable ancestral spirits (aiimu) who manifest themselves

⁶Hunt, 5.

⁷Ibid., 7.

in many ways and are often regarded as inhabiting wild fig-trees.”⁸

Before childbirth, these ancestors are believed to have power and the responsibility of shaping the baby in her mother’s womb. They also decide whether the baby shall be a boy or a girl.⁹ When the child is born prayers and libations are also offered to the ancestral spirits. This is mainly to thank the spirits for the baby and for safe delivery. As a form of sacrifices to the ancestral spirits, “a piece of hard ugali (African food made from cornflour) is ceremonially thrown over the roof and prayer offered to the ancestors, informing them of the birth and requesting their help for growing safely.”¹⁰

The child is then given a charm to protect him from danger. These charms are either necklaces that are hung on the neck or wrist bands that are tied on the right wrist of a boy or on the left wrist of a girl.¹¹ Since ATR claims that God has abandoned His creation and has handed down the affairs of the world to the spirits, there is no reference to what God has done for the newborn child. In some people groups, God is thanked when a child is born, but this is done through sacrifices and prayers to their lesser known god.

African Traditional Religion: Conception of Worship

African traditions have significantly overshadowed a Biblical understanding of the only true God and ultimately worship of Him. To many people, some of these traditions seem

⁸ James Thayer Addison. “Ancestor worship in Africa.” *Harvard Theological Review* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 1924): 8.

⁹ Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional religion in Biblical Perspective*. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd., 1989), 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

orthodox from within, but if carefully considered, they are like an unstoppable train ready to crash. One of the African traditions is witchcraft. Witchcraft is the belief that it is possible for man to exert an influence over his fellow human beings or to change the course of events especially by the use of spells and the invocation of evil spirits.¹²

Many people in Africa do not realize how much witchcraft affects the community as well as the worship of God all together. In African traditions long ago witchcraft was regarded as a very important part of life. For instance, “the Egyptians resorted to witchcraft in all cases where natural methods were of no avail, using very complicated and exact formulae that involved much study.”¹³ People believed that life cannot be complete without a practice of witchcraft or divination going on. Witchcraft was used for direction and special revelation, for example on the causes of sickness, death, infertility and revelation of future events.

The ideas of witchcraft have penetrated the African life in all its aspects and know no boundaries and rapidly permeate Christianity, Islam and traditional religions.¹⁴ Many African communities have accepted this way of life and many visit witchdoctors to get help in different areas of life. This has negatively affected the Biblical understanding of the only true God and ultimately His worship. There are writers who have maintained that African traditions have not affected the proper knowledge of God negatively, but positively. Their claim is based on the notion that we all worship the same god and that the god

¹²A. Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1990), Logos Bible Software 5.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Johannes Merz, “I am a Witch in the Holy Spirit: Rupture and Continuity of Witchcraft Beliefs in African Christianity.” *Missiology: An International Review* (Vol. XXXVI, no. 2, April 2008), 203–204.

of African Traditional religion is the same with the God of the Bible.¹⁵ But, the God we worship as Christians does not need any human being to make Him the greatest, for He is and has always been, and He does not need witches.

To illustrate how this has affected the knowledge of God in Africa, an example of a man who, according to an article by Merz, was a witch but later was converted and became a “good Christian” is suitable. In this article, this witch is a changed man and now he is serving the Lord in ministry, hence “a witch for God.”¹⁶ He claims to have powers of witchcraft from God who gives good witchcraft to people who can use it for good and not for evil. This man had power to heal the sick and to perform other miracles. It is evident from this article that David, the witch, has misunderstood the work of God and who God is. God does not deal craftily with His people (Deuteronomy 18: 10–21). He is all powerful (Exodus 15:6) and sovereign in all things, and His will for his children is stipulated in the Scriptures, and he is not to be identified with witchcraft or any human craftiness, for He is a holy God (Exodus 15:11). In places where witchcraft has been accepted as the order of the day, the worship of Yahweh in spirit and truth is deficient. This is because the people have the wrong image of who God is and how He operates in their lives.

A mistaken identity in worship is no worship at all. There is no other way to glorify God than to glorify Him in His presence. Witchcraft provides a separate means of worshiping God that claims to be as good as what the Lord has said in the Scriptures. Deuteronomy 18:10, which was originally spoken to the Levites as they were dedicated to God’s work, says, “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as

¹⁵Jim Harries, “The Perceived Nature of God in Europe and in Africa.” (*Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXVIII, no. 4, October).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 204.

an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer.” This text has great application to us today. Witchcraft and any other African tradition that does not look to God for firsthand information on life situations does not bring people to true worship of God, but shadows who God is and alters true worship into false and evil worship.

Biblical Christianity: Conception of God

Biblical Christianity believes in one Triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, and having the same attributes and perfections (Deuteronomy 6:4; II Corinthians 13:14). Jesus Christ, is the eternal Son of God. He became man, without ceasing to be God here on earth. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and deliver men from their sins (John 1:1–2, 14; Luke 1:35; Isaiah 9:6; 7:14; Philippians 2:5–8; Galatians 4:4–5). He accomplished our redemption through his finished work on the cross as a substitute for our sins and our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Romans 3:24–25; I Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:3–5). He ascended to heaven above at the Father’s right hand where He fulfills the ministry of Representative, Intercessor and Advocate as our High Priest (Acts 1:9–10; Hebrews 9:24, 7:25; Romans 8:34; I John 2:1–2).

In Biblical Christian religion the Holy Spirit, the third in the trinity, is the Person who rebukes the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and that He is the Supernatural Agent in regeneration, indwelling all believers and sealing them unto the day of redemption (John 16:8–11; II Corinthians 3:6; Romans 8:9; Hebrews 2:3–4; Ephesians 1:13–14).

Unlike in African Traditional Religion where Ancestral spirits are unknowable and dreaded, gods and spirits are

worshiped,¹⁷ Biblical Christianity worships a knowable God who is as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures, and He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. The Biblical God is not distant from His creation but very much concerned; He is sovereign. This means that He is in complete control of everything that happens on the earth and in heaven. There are many things that He has decreed that happen in the universe without contradiction. He also allows some things to happen because He has given humans a free will to choose what they want under his sovereign rule. Those who are in tune with Biblical Christianity know who God is and they know what He expects from them.

Biblical Christianity: Conception of Man

God created man as male and female according to Genesis 1:27, in His image. The initial plan of creating man was to create him in His own image and therefore what we have is the image of God displayed in male and female. According to Grudem, God, in three persons, (perhaps “Us”/“Our” in Genesis 1:26) created man in His image as man and female, two persons in one.¹⁸ Grudem says that though this does not fully reflect the image of God since He is in three persons and man in two persons, the unity teaches us about God and how His image looks like in terms of “interpersonal relationships, equality in personhood and importance, and difference in role and authority.”¹⁹ He notes that “just as the members of the trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct persons, so

¹⁷Hunt, 5.

¹⁸Wayne Grudem, *An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine: Systematic Theology* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 454.

¹⁹ Ibid., 454.

men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood.”²⁰

Concerning the differences of the men’s and women’s roles, Grudem says that, just as the members of the Trinity have different roles but equality in personhood and importance, so also mankind is. Human beings according to Grudem also have different roles. 1 Corinthians 11:3 however shows that there is authority involved between man and woman. The man is the head of a woman. In creation as well, God differentiated their roles by making Eve as a helper to Adam (Genesis 2:18).²¹

Grudem puts it well that we are all in the image of God and we reflect the character of God is His image. In creating man this way, there is a lot to learn about God and man and how man is to relate to one another and to God. It is important to note that, though men and women are distinct persons, they are equal in importance as God’s image bearers.

The Biblical understanding of man as male and female is important in relation to this paper, in understanding who God is and how he is to be worshiped. In African Traditional Religion, there is a misunderstanding of the relationship between God and man. This results in man living in fear of a god that he can never understand. The rise of witchcraft and worship of ancestral spirits is as an outcome of a demand to bridge the gap between man and God. The problem is that in the process, God is completely removed from the lives of His creation.

²⁰ Ibid., 456.

²¹ Ibid., 461.

Biblical Christianity: Conception of Worship

In 1 Chronicles 16:8–35 there is a great lesson of what Biblical worship is like.²² Many people in Africa are entangled in traditions and cultural practices in the name of worshipping God. African Traditional Religion has a form of worship that is unbiblical. This section of the paper will show a Biblical worship in light of the scripture named above.

Worship is an attitude that recognizes the greatness of God and inwardly bows down as a result. This is to say that it is not a subjective feeling or experience. It should be based on the unchanging character of God. Outward practices do not indicate that worship is being rendered to God. In the African way of worship, there are a lot of outward rituals that are performed to please or to appease God. These in themselves do not describe a true worshiper. In verse 28–30, the Lord is teaching us how our worship should look like.

However, in ATR worship is through a “mediator,” and witches, diviners and ancestral spirits play a great role. Communities gather around these highly valued people and spirits and they are the ones to do things and say things to their gods and that is termed as worship. Verses 8–12 of our text shows us the ‘how’ of a Biblical worship. Giving thanks to God, praying to Him, testifying what he has done, singing about him glorifying his name, rejoicing in him and remembering what he has done in our lives should constitute what we render to God as our worship. These can only come from us if we know God and we have seen Him working in our lives. It is impossible to thank God if you don’t know why or what you are thanking Him for. In the Scriptures, we are told of God’s mighty works which we should thank God for. In ATR, there is no such emphasis on the

²²C. R. Wood, *Sermon Outlines on Great Doctrinal Themes* (Grand Rapids: MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), 61–62, Logos Bible Software 5.

Bible, and so there is no absolute account of God's mighty work. God is unknowable to them.

As noted above, God is the object of our worship. It should come from a mind that recognizes the greatness of God and inwardly bows down as a result. In verses 14–22 of 1 Chronicles 16, the Lord is our God who is alive and is actively working in His creation. Unlike the god of ATR who is distant from his creation, the God of the Bible is alive and present at all times.²³ The God of the Bible is a God who keeps his promises and commitments (vv.15–20), and protects His people (vv. 21–22). He has not left the universe to be controlled by “lesser gods” and spirits while he stays away unconcerned. He is an active God, and therefore He deserves our worship.

Since worship is an internal attitude, it is expected that one shows certain attitudes and actions based on it. These include: Praising the Lord, rejoicing in the Lord, submission to the Lord, obedience to the Lord's Word and witnessing for Him—best way to share His greatness with others.²⁴

Conclusion

Worshipping God demands a Biblical understanding of who God is, for there is no other like Him. African Traditional Religion lacks this kind of knowledge because it does not have the Scriptures, and even when it makes reference to the Scriptures, it is not as the sole authority in the worship of God and knowledge of God. Biblical worship actually permeates all of life. Biblical worship is an attitude that should change the way we think and also the way we live.

²³Richard W. Deehaan, *The Living God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967).

²⁴C. R. Wood, *Sermon Outlines on Great Doctrinal Themes* (Grand Rapids: MI: Kregel Publications, 1994), 61–62 (Logos Bible Software 5).

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BOOK REVIEW: *ESV GLOBAL STUDY BIBLE*

Jamie Smith

J. I. Packer, Wayne Grudem, and Ajith Fernando, eds. *ESV Global Study Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012. 1,984 pp.

We live in an age when many excellent study Bibles exist to assist us in discovering the riches of God's Word. Therefore, many ask which study Bible is the best available today. Although this question is impossible to answer since each person has their own tastes, the *ESV Global Study Bible* is certainly one of the top three study Bibles available in the English language today. It is an exceptionally well-designed resource for Biblical study and life application that every Christian would benefit from. In addition to the focus on the globally-applicable message of the Gospel found from Genesis to Revelation, this study Bible contains an array of well-designed, user-friendly features.

The *ESV Global Study Bible* is truly a global collaboration of Biblical scholars, which enables it to connect with audiences throughout the world. The version used as the base Biblical text (English Standard Version) had a fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee that utilized more than fifty Biblical experts who served as Translation Review Scholars. In 2001 this team completed its work and provided an accurate and easily understandable English translation useful around the world. In more recent years another committee united to add concise, yet thorough study notes to this translation. Whereas many study Bibles are the product of just one theologian's study notes, the *ESV Global Study Bible* is the product of a 65-member team of theologians that contributed to the study notes from Genesis to Revelation. Furthermore, a team of 14 authors from all over the globe wrote additional articles (located at the back of this study

Bible) addressed to the global church, to help Christians worldwide make sense of highly practical issues in Bible study and personal spiritual growth.

The most distinctive feature of the *ESV Global Study Bible* is the focus on the global nature of Christianity and the eternal purpose of God to call out a multitude of redeemed people from every kindred, tongue, people group, and nation. Just as the Jewish people of the Old Testament forgot that they were always supposed to be a light to the gentiles for salvation, so today many Christians do not recognize that the redemption of humanity truly was at the core of God's plan from the foundation of the world. The *ESV Global Study Bible* helps readers recognize the golden thread of the gospel woven all throughout the 66 books of the Bible to present one unified story of God's pursuit of mankind, whom He would personally reconcile and adopt into his family. This central truth is first clearly explained in the *ESV Global Study Bible's* introduction to the Bible. However, each individual book of the Bible also has two introductions to that specific book. The standard introduction addresses issues such as author, date of writing, theme of the book, and outline of the text. In addition, each book also has an introduction to explain the global message of the book by explaining its place in redemptive history, as well as highlighting redemptive imagery and phrases. By the end of this introduction the reader understands the universal themes and global message for today for that particular book of the Bible. All of this causes the *ESV Global Study Bible* to have great practical appeal when it comes to understanding and applying the Great Commission in our generation.

The *ESV Global Study Bible* also has great exegetical appeal, as its vast array of resources helps the reader understand the truth of God's Word book-by-book and verse-by-verse. First, and one of the most helpful features in showing how each book fits

together, are the use of timelines to create a chronological understanding of when all the historical events took place and when each book of the Bible was written. There are timelines in the introductions to both the Old Testament and the New Testament as well as in the introduction to each individual book. This is especially helpful, for example, when studying the books of the prophets and trying to make sense of what was taking place in the history of Israel and Judah during each prophet's ministry. Second, to further add historical and background information there are 900 Fact Boxes (color coded in tan) and 125 profiles of key people in the Biblical record (color coded in grey) dispersed throughout the study notes at the bottom of the pages in key locations to help the reader understand cultural issues they might otherwise overlook. Third, and also scattered throughout the study notes, are 120 various charts and diagrams used to simplify huge amounts of information or compare and contrast important ideas and events. Fourth, since much of the Bible is written in narrative form to reveal God's interaction with mankind in specific cultures and places, the *ESV Global Study Bible* also offers its readers more than 100 maps scattered throughout the study notes to create understanding of the ancient Biblical world and the significance of details given about each place. Fifth, the *ESV Global Study Bible* also offers a glossary of more than 300 words and phrases defining important concepts, in order to help the reader understand what is really being communicated by God through human language. Lastly, to help the reader locate important passages and see how they all fit together in presenting one unified theological message, the *ESV Global Study Bible* has an extensive 57-page concordance at the back of the Bible and 80,000 cross references located within the study notes.

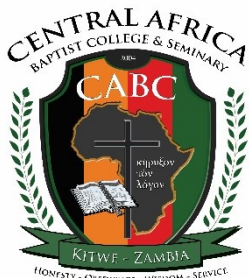
Truly, the *ESV Global Study Bible* is an extraordinary resource. Yet, it must be emphasized that all of these wonderful

study tools being placed in one volume are meant to be exactly that—tools. The study notes of Biblical scholars should not replace the reader's own critical analysis of the Biblical text itself. The Christian today must still follow the example of the Jews in Berea from Acts 17:11. The study notes and articles found in this study Bible are excellent, but they are not the inspired word of God. Only the Biblical text of Genesis to Revelation is inspired and inerrant. Therefore, when reading the study notes we must then re-read the text itself to see if these things stated in the study notes are so. Thankfully, the theological positions stated in the study notes do clearly convey orthodox evangelical positions. In fact, the contributors to the study notes even offer the reader a summary of various theological positions on passages that are often debatable even within orthodox Christianity. This is certainly a strength as it teaches the reader how to think through the issues rather than just what to think about each issue. However, many readers will no doubt wish that the study notes provided further clarity on important issues to the global church in twenty-first century. Places where the notes seem to be especially unclear or overly one-sided theologically include: the cessation of miraculous sign gifts (1 Corinthians 12–13) and the actual expected chronology of events within the study of eschatology (end times prophecy). For example, in the notes from 1 Corinthians 12–13, the position that holds that miraculous gifts have ceased for today is only mentioned once in passing, but the whole rest of the passage is interpreted as if it to be seen as the normative experience of believers today. This is a serious deficiency and effectively silences the voices of those cessationists who would disagree with this interpretation of the passage. Also, the introductory material and notes on the book of Revelation are conspicuously silent concerning God's future plans for the nation of Israel. This church-centric approach leaves the door open for misinterpretation and does not allow

for the concerns of many who believe that God has specific future plans and promises for Israel as a nation. The theological positions and practical implications for modern Christianity on both of these issues are greatly debated today and although clearer positions in the study notes would be appreciated, modern day “Bereans” will study the text and come to their own conclusions through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, with all of these features in mind, it is no understatement to say that the *ESV Global Study Bible* is a world-class resource. At Central Africa Baptist College we highly encourage each follower of Jesus Christ to get a copy and study it diligently. The *ESV Global Study Bible* is available in paperback, hardcover, and leather bound printed Bibles. Plus, it is also available online, with all of the aforementioned resources. Therefore, even in its availability this study Bible lives up to its name.

Jamie Smith is the Director on Missions at CABC, and holds a Master of Arts in Evangelism and Church Planting from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He serves as an elder at Kitwe Church.



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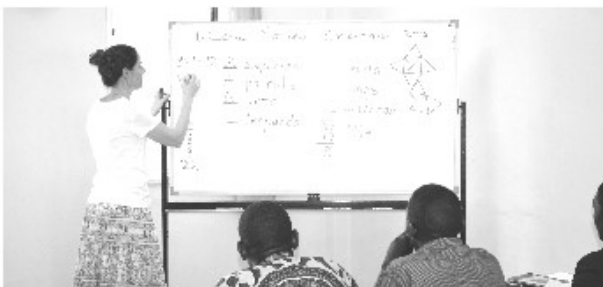
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